

BRANDS FROM THE BURNING

By

AUBERT LEWIS MEREDITH, A.B., S.T.B.

Dedicated to the
Unheralded Minister of the Cross

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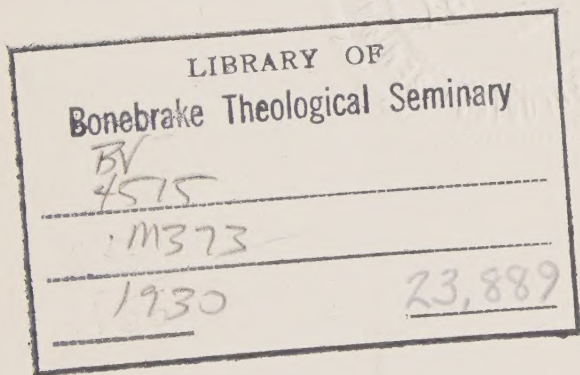
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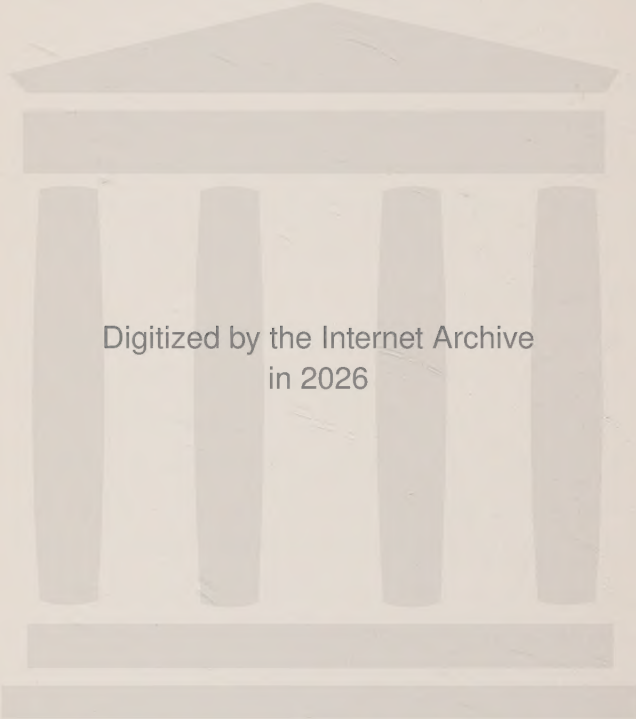
INDIANA

Foreword.

If one does not care to read a story true to human experience as it occurs over and over again, then let him turn to more congenial tales. But if he wants to know of what sort many, if not most, of us are made, to what depths a man may sink, to what heights he may aspire, what achievements he may make, what the measure of redeeming Love, let him read this book feeling that sin is not glossed over and that virtue is not treated but as a valorous thing.

I have done no violence to person or place. No thought of revenge is concealed within these pages. I have written feeling as if I were in the presence of the Supernatural, feeling as I fancy some prophets felt as they gave expression to the thoughts of their hearts. As I mention many places herein named I do so with a joy unspeakable even though there be some bitter memories. I dedicate my life experiences which are worthy to my readers and commit the rest to the forgetfulness of God.

I write this life story in answer to a cry from within, inexplainable and yet intelligible. I yield to the soul-cry and pen the story with a prayer of hope and even as I begin I feel a great joy filling me.



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CHAPTER I.

The Minister's Family.

Provost was situated on a rolling tableland surrounded by delectable hills. A winding river bathed the foot of tableland and hill and finally was lost to view as it emptied itself into the sunset. Giant oak, poplar, elm, and maple waved their leafy hands at the stars or sighed contentedly as the winds of heaven laved their branches at noonday. Ferns and moss and myriad flowers carpeted the hills and nodded at their own images mirrored in each rivulet which oozed out of every pore of the hillsides. The woods were one immense and beautiful aviary guarded by the hand of Deity, and the songs which ascended therefrom or sprinkled the earth with mystic charm were as incense offered with abandonment of devotion by an obedient Nature to a Creative Heart that has ever brooded over His Universe e'en "ere the morning stars sang together." It would seem that no mean nor shriveled soul could ever live in such munificence, and yet we are told that the serpent loafed in Eden, and that the Iscariott satisfied his hunger with the miracle banquet of loaves and fishes. Nature is more religious than man. The sun veiled its face when Pilate murdered Jesus and earth shook with grief while the Chief Priests were stolid in their criminality. It is the steward and not the property which slays the proprietor.

Father came to this village as resident minister when I was but a lad and remained here for years. He was a close student of things Biblical but he loved the open air and the rural atmosphere. The parsonage at Provost stood on a five-acre lot which father annually trucked to its capacity with such care that mother often remarked that no weed would have the courage to peek above the most infinitesimal clod. The trucking furnished the growing family with much food in season, was a means of grace and recreation for father, and supplied abundant exercise for the children, so that none of us grew up to be indolent.

My father had dedicated me to the Lord and mother, while less effusive, was none the less interested. But I seemed to be more like father in his love of the open than in his love for the Church and for books. I early began roaming surrounding woods and became absorbed in Nature all about me until I would forget the religion of creed and ritual in spite of the fact that father was considered the champion of the faith he thought once delivered to the saints. In early life, due to poor health, I did not secure the education my parents had mapped out for me.

This lack of training, together with our poverty, and my early seeking employment in the community, set my mind in a warp regarding human nature. My soul revolted against what even then I sensed to be inconsistencies in

those who considered themselves locally eminent in religious affairs. I thus all the more sought those seclusions where the worshippers seemed ideally consistent with the praise they were giving the Author of their being. Consequently I failed to learn how to healthfully react against those abrasions of conduct which I again and again too easily saw in God's supposed elect.

The ramshackle parsonage in which we lived was a source of constant anxiety to mother for it was open to wind and moisture in a manner well nigh intolerable. But the saints in Israel were oblivious to its unhealthful condition. And my own ill health was magnified by that very condition. These saints loved their pastor after a sort for his self-sacrificial life which they felt to be his rightful and necessary lot, hence they never once sought to lead him to forget that he was born to be a sacrifice for the Kingdom's sake and they appeared to feel that his entire family were likewise under deep necessity of being sacrificial victims of father's consecration. I used to wonder why father remained so long in Provost, yet I do not know that existence would have been any less intolerable in any other parish. Human nature has its universal elements and most of us are prone to ride the waves of Lethe when obligation is likely to ask for a hearing.

I think I was more reticent than the average lad but was as quick in action. I sometimes shocked the elect by engaging in fisticuffs with my fellows. Father even had a few visits from the parish regarding the waywardness of his eldest son. These terra firma saints made it quite clear to him that I was not of the elect. What the saints in glory thought I cannot say. Then father, whether from fear of my spiritual declension or from fear of his elders, I cannot say, would discourse to me about the wages of sin and the sword-taker perishing with the sword, which godly admonition left in my mind a vague sense of doom but did not reveal to me any practical way to avoid a re-encounter with the sons of these same terra firma saints who were so exercised about my fate. Mother was a poor theologian but I felt she understood boys far better, and when she felt it necessary to interview me she touched a secret chord and I would love her more dearly than before and pledge her that I would try next time to do right. But high resolve and deep emotion do not always satisfactorily solve the practical problems of a boy's life and that was something which mother was never quite able to do. I somehow grew up feeling that a good mother is of more significance in a boy's life than a contending theologian, and I still feel so. Mother always made me feel that she set great store by me, and while she was

always ready to forgive, still I had greatly disappointed her, and this hurt me more deeply than to be reminded that I had broken some great commandment of the Church, or shocked the saints.

Our maternal grandfather came to see us occasionally and his visits were always looked forward to with great elation by us children. He was wont to take some one or two of us children upon his knee and relate his experiences in storm and calm, with drunken sailor or excited passenger, and how he came to know human nature so well that he felt he could read a man at a glance. Although his swimming feats went by unheralded he had rescued more than one from the deep. He had an uncanny faith in God. He would often say, "I tell you, I believe that if a man lives close to God he will have secrets told him that would startle the average person. I have never been in a storm that I didn't have a premonition of its approach and I have always set about preparing for it and thus escaped the fate of many another man. Other men have accused me of leading a charmed life, but it is untrue. I was simply trusting God and profiting by His revelations."

As a rule, mother would send me away from him to relieve me from the intensity of interest I manifested in his narratives. She would chide her father with telling us his tales of the water and thus stirring us up until I for one

could not sleep. Grandfather would laugh and tell her that if she would but let me ship with him I would soon be rugged as a sailor, but she would never consent to this, much to my boyish sorrow. But grandfather instilled into my nature a love for the sea which has remained to this present. I sometimes sit by the ocean by the hour watching the ships that seem alive, or scan the horizon for vistas which belong only to the deep, or gaze at the waves which ceaselessly lap the sands or rush against the impregnable rocks. I have wandered for hours up and down the beach looking for sea life to all appearances and yet more truly giving myself to the influences which drift in from the limitless expanse of ocean and air from God's far land of Somewhere—the world beyond our horizon. Was it India or China or the Antipodes? What worlds of queries introduced themselves to my willing mind. I shall never forget them to my dying day. And when the stream of life is bearing me onward toward the tideless sea I hope to put out toward that far country which lies beyond our horizon.

But how we children, after grandfather was gone, would convert an old box into a ship and sail the seas to seek the golden apples or their equivalent as only a child can fancy! Were we living our happiest days? I have seen times later in life when I would have answered in the affirmative, for it would have been true so far as I was concerned. Has not literature been

graced with the beautiful fancies of childhood joys, innocence, and beauty? Does not the world-weary and sin-sick heart revert to the days of childhood which were so filled with the presence of mother and the beautiful dreams of God and the Babe of Bethlehem?

Sometimes we found a wagon-box and converted it into a wonderful carriage into which we climbed enroute to church. Because I was the eldest I would be the preacher and what wonderful sermons I would preach to a breathless audience who insisted on bringing their doll-babies to church. How quiet all was except when a make-believe baby would cry out during the sermon and the anxious mamma would leave the audience chiding her disturbing youngster all the while in subdued tones. What sermons of wrath and mercy were poured out on the tell-tale winds which so often persisted in whispering them to the neighbors until they would slip out into their yards and listen and watch with good-humored interest. What great prophesyings they did about the future greatness of the parson's lad. Those were wonderful years. Sometimes I have sorrowed because they came to an end. Sometimes I have wished that they might return. Sometimes I have prayed that the land to which we are all bound might be as care-free and innocent. Sometimes, nay, oftentimes have I cursed the influences which caused them to end. What tragedy that the spirit of

such days as childhood's should be scorned or insulted or dismissed.

The seared conscience, the wind-riven heart, the warped will are witnesses of the baneful effects of losing the glow of childhood conscience and the innocent wisdom of a pure heart. I could lament the loss of these did not heaven's forgiveness forbid my worrying. Worrying enslaves one. It lashes him to the footstool of his transgressions and makes him still to serve them. Fruitless regrets rob the present of its just share of man's service and weakens his power to achieve. "Let the dead bury their dead." It is not right to keep the lifeless corpse in the living room of the soul. Let's take the crepe off the door, fling up the windows, cease the funeral dirge, and let the glad air bear the tones of our song of release and hope to many a clime. Is not this heavenly and man's proper attitude? But how glad it must be for those in glory to know the preventive grace of God to a greater degree than the redemptive grace, who followed the gleam and sinned not! Every child of Adam born into this world is called upon of God to live a sinless life as was the first pair. Every child of Adam, it would seem, save One, has eaten the forbidden fruit and found it to be sour grapes. Is not that why the teeth of humanity are set on edge? But suppose it had never been. If every unborn child could foresee into what sort of world he is to come would he not want

to remain on the hidden side of the gates of life? Pity the children!

Sometimes I sit and dream of that bourne from which no traveler returns and try to picture what all the children are doing who have been garnered by a kind but apparently ruthless Reaper. Will they be grown up as if they had died in old age? Or, will not the Heavenly Father keep them sweet and dear and innocent alike of lore and adult experience throughout all the infinite ages? Can Heaven be at its richest and best if there be no little ones to play about the footstool of God, win a kiss from Mary Magdalene, and, climbing upon the knees of Moses or Peter, pull their reverend beards in innocent laughter? Surely the prattle of a babe or its laughter would not disturb the music of the heavenly choir, nor break in upon the discourses of Isaiah or Apollos. Who there would insist on their worshipping God like grown-ups and bend every energy to defend a creed handed down from the fathers where there was no place for the affectionate embrace of the Lord by one of earth's innocents who knew no more of theology than Abel knew of hell?

I do not suppose that I was an outstanding lad in anything. Perhaps, if one drew distinctions closely, I was better than the average because of home influences. I possessed an idealism of which I was scarcely conscious which caused me to recoil from the behavior

of lads in the village who were learning the wisdom of the street. I was called "Parson." I wonder what is the secret of keeping a lad from the vanities of youth which mar the image of innocence within. I stood resolutely from, then irresolutely upon the borders of the behavior of the knowing age, as I saw lads whose fathers were elders and deacons in my father's church tremble upon the brink, then plunge in. I fairly believe there were men in the church who would have been less concerned to have known their sons were profane than to have known of father's having done violence to their creed. Verbal loyalty was their mark of supreme fidelity.

My parents took it for granted that we were religious, as, indeed we were. It is patent to childhood. But this very fact was a shining weakness in my father's theological system, or in its application. He sought to know the spiritual status of all in his flock save that of his own children. Father was so preoccupied with religion and mother so occupied with domestic duties that personal interviews with their children were unheard-of tasks. Father knew theology but not folk. It never occurred to the ministers of his day that psychology was quite as advantageous for the minister as dogmatics. They were defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints. Humanity might be saved or damned as the circumstances might determine, but the faith must be defended at

all costs and woe be unto him who dared utter a word or lift a finger against the faith. Nothing short of a sizzling hell would be his just portion.

If estrangements begin between a child and its parents, it is likely to begin when the child first enters school. This is because the parent fails to realize that a great crisis has arisen in the child's life which more than ever before needs a parent's confidence and guidance. A child's social relationships are great levelers. The pathetic thing about it is that so often the child cannot choose the level. It is thrust upon him by his environment. He must either choose what lies about him or choose nothing, and when that takes place the child's moral responsibility in the choosing hovers near zero. His ignorance of human nature is his chief characteristic. He naturally follows the line of least resistance. So, little by little I was adapting myself to my environment and thinking the social thoughts of my years, and I was little by little picking up the group slang and mannerisms, feeling a sort of revulsion at first, but I did not know how to make the smittings of my childhood conscience practical for conduct, and no one about me ever understood child psychology enough to tide me over the crisis. In this I am persuaded that I was living the life of the majority of lads.

Today we are at the dawn of systematic child study. It should be directed in the fear

of the Lord and not left to self-styled mental scientists who do not experience the finer impulses of the soul. Pity the parent who is too illy equipped to direct the child through every storm of body, intellect, and soul to which he is heir from babyhood to adult life. A man's knowledge of the world, of God, of himself can be gleaned at the feet of the wrong masters. To become worldly wise is no mark of glory. Innocence of the experience of wrong was one of the ideals of the idyll of Eden. God help us to picture the holy innocence of this primal pair.

And I feel confident that the reason the sons of some ministers become cause for regret is that their parents are too illy acquainted with the follies and foibles of the world to tide their sons over the rougher places of early life. They live too much in theory while their sons are living in reality. Some ministers feel their responsibility to the parish so much that they see no parental responsibility. They are looking for the lost sheep of the House of Israel while their own sons are wandering away from the fold. They fail to see the incorrectness of their own offspring. Some ministers are swayed by the professional sense of duty. They try to save every mother's son in the community save those of their own roof tree. In this attitude one can even lose, not his own life, but his own soul. His professional sense of duty eclipses his personal sense of Deity.

The conscientiousness of such men is professional rather than ethical.

But there's a cause more universal than that. The influence of the parish has much to do with the character-formation of the minister's child. The idealism of the Christian home suffers many shocks in coming in contact with the manner in which so many folk live today. Christianity in earnest and Christianity in practice may be leagues apart. Sunday religion and Monday living may be of no akin whatsoever. Dissensions in the Church, slowness to pay the pastor's salary, failure to stand by the pastor in promoting Kingdom enterprises, distortions in social, political, or business life—all these and more are sooner or later discovered by the child of the manse only to effect his destiny. Confidence is lost in professions of faith, lack of reverence springs up in the heart toward all which he sees and hears which passes for religion. The minister and his wife review these discrepancies in the home, thus filling the mind of the child with fuel to feed the flame of unbelief that all too easily is kindled in the human heart. To discuss religious problems as glibly as the problems of the market place but fosters lack of reverence for things sacred. This so often is done in the manse.

My ears received more than their just share of such things. My young soul was rent and torn thereby but I said naught of it. But I

wandered out beneath the stars and looked hungrily into the deep blue above for some word of explanation; I lost myself by day among the delectable hills, "where every prospect pleases", away from man who came to seem vile to me, and tried to read the messages of the flowers and birds and tumbling brooks until the emotions which stirred my young heart would almost pound their way out to escape forever. And whether beneath the stars or in the woods I found a joy and a peace and a word of prophecy which I felt I could never forget, but when I would turn my steps townward I could feel the contaminations of doubt and soul turmoil and artificial godliness creeping over me like miasma from the fens of hell. Then I would wonder and worry and sometimes weep as I tried to think of the relief out in God's world as set over against the bondage in man's circle of influence. And I confess with sadness and tears that I was not able to reach any satisfactory conclusion. I could not change the situation. Have you never been out in the open, fresh, frosty air until your lungs and blood were filled almost to bursting with God's health, and then have entered a little, stuffy room where every atom of the oxygen has been used up and the folk there have breathed the same air many times and yet are altogether ignorant of the stifling atmosphere? That was the way I felt as I would turn back from beneath the stars or from the friendly

woods to enter the town in which supposedly it had been God's will that we cast our lot. And suppose per force you must remain in that stale room with doors closed, how long will it be ere you yourself become stupefied and will be giving your quota of poison air for the others therein to breathe and re-breathe?

I say this to the surprise of many that my greatest incentive to sin lay in my boyish efforts to solve the problems which stood out before my growing consciousness all too vividly for my own health. I never talked to father or mother about this. Did I not live in their home all the time and were they not utterly silent as regards talking to me, their son, concerning my own soul? And did not some of the vexations I hungered to answer reach my ears at their table and about the family hearth? They could not solve them in open conversation, how could they solve them in private interview? These problems grew more and more to weigh upon father and I could see the cumulative effects they made upon him, and, while I did not feel that he understood me or could help me, nevertheless I loved him and was loyal in thought to him.

Immature and inexperienced though I was I slowly began to suspect that I was fighting a losing battle and it nearly broke my heart. Little by little I lost interest in the woods and flowers and streams. Little by little the language of the stars grew incomprehensible to

me. I still wandered out alone, but instead of looking into the sky or studying the flowers and listening to the birds, I looked within the growing blank of my own soul and heard the whisperings of failure within my own conscience, but I never told my plight to any one. Gradually I ceased to hold fortunate communion with God. I knew that my hope, my optimism, my dreams were dying and felt that ere long my own soul would lose its last reserve of resiliency, and I knew the cause and I could not change the conditions.

This evolution which had been going on for a period of years at last reached a climax. More and more also father was losing sight of his theology in the growing revelations of the defections of some of his leading parishioners. It was a jar to his sensibilities and left him nearly stranded in a sea of set dogmas. He began to see that something would have to be done. He had lived in a realm of dogma so long that he did not know how to face the actual. Mother endeavored to come to the rescue by suggesting a revival, and father seized the suggestion with avidity. True, he had held protracted meetings in the town but he had gone about it more with the idea that it was his duty to preach the truth than that it was his duty to save men and make them righteous before God. Dogma was heavier than destiny.

CHAPTER II.

The Crash.

Father was still preaching at Provost. Why he remained so long in what seemed to me a God-forsaken town, I never knew. It may have been as good as the average, or worse. But he appeared to not see the trend of spiritual conditions until they were well retrograded. The people there loved him and were willing to have him stay. He'd been doing so much of the pulling that the Church took it for granted that he was doing no more than God's will. At last an evangelistic campaign was discussed and decided on. An evangelist was secured and all began auspiciously. But many of our fondest dreams are blighted. Objection began to be whispered. This soon became public and in various ways was manifested. The meetings ended disastrously. Father had worked himself to high nervous tension preparing for the meetings and had been on the mountain-top during their progress, so that when they fell flat his physical nature likewise sank. Serious illness followed during which his recovery was despaired of. It became whispered that his illness was due to his disappointment and an atmosphere of foreboding hung like a pall over every heart. But it is one thing to feel the presence of terrible realities and quite another to repent of one's sins

and make a new start in life. It must be admitted that some men have gone up the steeps of contrition to the very gates of God, looked within, turned about and gone back. Others have trembled on the very brink of ruin speechless with terror only to later go back in sin commitment and be damned.

Father discovered that zeal for the Lord's house might not be spirituality. The miasma of indifference which had settled down over the church, which brought desolation to our hopes, was not to be easily dispelled. Father came home from the last service of the series and wept like a child. Mother had much to do to prevent her own collapse, but father had a serious illness as a result, which made a profound impression upon me. It seemed the last blow to a crushing defeat. I felt that the last ounce of moral energy, the last thread of faith, were gone. I looked into my own soul and found it blank, as it seemed to me. I felt that I was a sinner as there was no response to the inquiry I made of my soul. But I did not tell anyone. Father was ill and mother was crushed and loaded with care. Besides, I had never told them my inmost thoughts. But mother soon came to suspect that some cataclysm had occurred in my life and she watched me and even tried to question me but I was sphinx-like. I attended church because father was minister. But I looked with disgust on every prayer and profession that was rendered

by the church in general. I came to hate the very name of religion, but always showed deference to father and mother in their profession of faith. None who had been responsible for the cataclysm ever showed any sorrow for their wrong, nor confessed in the least their sin, and I felt that if that were religion I wanted none of it.

Finally it dawned upon my parents that I was not only indifferent toward religion but that I was growing irreligious. This caused them great anguish and they began talking to me about it, but I would not tell. I have heard them discussing me with sobs, and I have come upon them in the stillness of the night weeping and holding me up to the Throne and they never knew. Sometimes I would listen with awe as if the gates of God were about to swing open. Sometimes I would go away sobbing. Again I would hasten on shaking my clenched fists toward those who had caused us such calamity, as if in some manner that would render justice in the case. I never missed a service my father held if I were at home, until in later years. And as I now look back upon those tragic days I am sure that I was not so far away from God as I then felt myself to be. But as no one understood my condition, no one offered to me the healing for my wounded soul, hence I went deeper and deeper into forgetfulness of God and further and further away from virtue and truth, until I no longer felt the impulse to do

the will of God and no longer cared to have the sense of His presence within my nature. I naturally began to drift away from the things which had once meant so much to me. I began to drink after awhile, little knowing what effect it would have upon me. I became dissipated not so much from a craze for drink as from a sort of hope to drown my reflections. I seemed to imagine that my drinking would be a public rebuke to those who had done so grave wrong to my heart and home. It was a vain fancy.

I was never arrested. Every one in the small community knew me, and even the Irish constable would take me to my father's door or drag me to the livery barn, and sometimes he would exclaim, "Ach, what will become of the poor boy? May the saints rest his soul."

Father would talk to me at times but it was always in such a theological fashion that the longer he talked the further removed he seemed from me. His silence was far more eloquent than his speech. The church never seemed to try to oust my father on my account, whether from pity for the family or indifference to the whole pathetic situation, I never knew. I was the only black sheep of the family. The other children were upright and well considered. Some whispered "Mysterious dispensation of Providence" as regards me, not knowing themselves what that meant. But as I look back over those fateful years I wonder

that I lived. I went at headlong pace once I was under way. Physically I was not rugged and began to feel old before I was twenty-five years of age.

I had dreamed when a lad and even after I began my life of decline of some day being able to make life more comfortable for my parents, but it was this peculiar affection for them coupled with such abnormal circumstances which made me the drunkard which I was. I saw this at times very clearly, then it would madden me and I would get drunk again. I did not feel inclined to reform so that my dream might come true. I wonder now how I held a job, yet my employer was a just man and loved my father and was aware of the effect of my life upon my parents, and he bore with me. Then I became a good carpenter and was worth all he paid me. I did not think of him as a Christian but as a man who could be trusted. I came to squander my wages, generally giving something to mother, but I saved nothing myself. Socially I came to have my pals. Most of us can find our own levels. They never came to the house unless to call me out. I never invited them there. When my brothers and sisters grew up we went our different ways. They never joined me in my group and I never went into theirs. They were well respected. I belonged to another world. "Not all of Abraham's seed are children of the Promise." I grew to be almost passionately restless. It was

the restlessness of a soul in a far country. I had at times certain compunctions of conscience but they did not seem to be intelligible. They had little ethical content. Mother sometimes essayed to talk to me regarding my life but I had little or nothing to say. I was more and more drifting out of the Somewhat into the Nowhere.

It would be wearisome to relate in detail my experiences during the next few years. At first I thought to tell it all and I actually had written down much which occurred but I abandoned the plan. Many do not care to read such news. It is utterly impossible to convey to another the experiences which were mine during those years of transition. Brought up as I was, believing in an idealism which was little short of Divine, then to cast adrift upon a lonely sea of mental and moral anguish was like drifting from the hopes of time upon the trackless ocean of despair in a world upon which no sun has ever risen, the darkness growing more intense all the while and the shore-lines of my embarking growing fainter with each passing day. The horrors of my lot were made more terrible because I was so conscious of it all.

Needless to say that I was far away from those shore-lines before it became known to the general public, since I was a lad reticent in disposition. When it began to dawn upon others that I was adrift the effect of their

amazement upon me heightened my own sense of lostness. I saw an impassable gulf moving in between myself and them. I do not suppose that they were withdrawing from me, and I have since observed that I was no worse than were some of them, but my imagination lent force to my own feeling of estrangement. I felt myself to be about the only lost soul in the village, although I never once quite forgot the fact that it was the disloyalty of father's deacons which had brought me to this. As time wore away I became less conscious of my moral loneliness and more conscious of my hatred for them. This is a psychological and moral condition which most folk are utterly incapable of understanding. But there are others who have drifted over the same trackless waste as myself. And it is a tragedy akin to the inferno when there dies out of one's life the at-homeness of the soul.

One good saint in the village, God rest her soul, called me into her home one day to see some of her books. There were none which interested me but I did not tell her. I was more or less familiar with all she had through seeing them at home, which fact she probably knew, but it furnished her with an excuse to have me in her home. Adroitly as she knew how she sought to elicit an expression of my feelings and the story of my experience but I did not tell her enough to enlighten her much. But I

did note that her soul was wrought up concerning me, as little by little she gave way to her own feelings and fears. I could not but respect her but I did not reveal the facts she so deeply desired to know. Words never had come easily to me and in the consciousness of my own disparity of nature I was dumb.

Perhaps to some I may have appeared an anomaly. I could not help feeling that I was one day to do something worthwhile. I knew I was headed in the opposite direction yet could not bring myself to making the fact public by any utterance of my own as a confession. Later on I did not care for I had lost hope, but during a certain period of my misfortune I wanted the fact concealed from even my parents, yet all the while I knew that they knew.

In these later years I often wonder as I have seen young men and women headed away from truth if they had any premonition whatsoever of the significance of losing out of their souls their pristine innocence. Knowledge of sin may be an eye-opener but it is not wisdom. It is suicide. It is true also that Cain has had much to do with Abel's death. The social order has many blood-stains upon its hands. Many of the stumbling-blocks of earth have been left there by careless minds. Pity him who is not prepared for the impediment. I was thrown and I was wounded at an age when I was not prepared for the dilemma and the years succeeding were colored and maimed by untimely

introduction to the social order prevailing about me. It is indeed pathos for one to be thrust out into the world about him immature in soul and in wisdom. Warps of life are formed in times like that which may affect even his eternity. But there are multitudes who suffer thus and we wonder at the warp of soul and the bias of mind possessed by such a multitude. Some men are criminals from design and some from misfortune. Eden was destroyed in the long ago and now amid the thorns and wild beasts our young are reared.

When I could no longer find any interest in the confines of Provost I drifted to the city with no particular aim. I had lost interest in the stars, the hills, and the choruses of Nature.

In the city the saloons looked inviting and the churches had no charm for me. True, I did not see the carcasses which lay mouldering in shame behind the saloon. I saw only the glitter and the obsession. I had lost my moorings within and was anchored to nothing without. I had no abiding serious thought. I was in a strange world morally and a large sea upon which to drift. Much of the past soon slipped away from me. The folk at home tried to write me often but I seldom replied. I lived to no purpose. At times I would recall my early ambitions and environment and feel they were mine still but no ethical import was attached to the feeling. I made no effort to seek or seize any opportunity to reform. I had become a

sinner through occasion rather than from disposition. I saw no way of escape nor did it occur to me to seek one.

My employers represented different strata of moral perception. Some would not have a drunk man on the job. Some did not care so long as the employee was sober during working hours. Some did not care so long as the employee was sober enough to work. Some did not seem to mind a man's laying-off occasionally to sober up. They appeared to have been accustomed to that sort of thing. Some advised me, some cursed me, some laughed at me, some seemed to be praying for me, but the last type was the scarcest of the lot.

I was over much of the country in those years yet I had no soul for sight-seeing. The hills, the rivers, the woods, the plains, the sea, the mountains had no voice for me. I found no companionship in Nature. Her voices were unheard. Her language had no interpreter within my soul.

Occasionally some one would approach me with some degree of interest in my welfare, only to withdraw when he saw how little interest I manifested in his exhortations. Some asked me to sign the pledge. Some sought my conversion. Some urged me to join the church, or the Salvation Army. The results were invariably the same. I would have none of them. I refused to be the subject of any reformer's experiments. I knew I was far away from the

original state of my soul. But there was still a lingering sense of hate for the forces which had had to do with my decline. I felt myself sinking deeper into depravity, but I made no effort to save myself further descent. I sometimes had from my mother some bit of news which recalled past years, but aside from a deadened heartache no effect was produced on me. Her epistles of love and solicitude, often baptized with her tears, caused a certain yearning for lost years but nothing more. I respected her and her messages. The solicitude of others nettled me. Under no circumstances was I minded to better myself.

The last city in which I found myself was known as a city of churches but the saloons were as numerous and there was a certain relationship between the two types of institutions. Out of the same pocket has gone more than once into the treasury of Christ and into the treasury of Bacchus money unrighteously acquired, a sort of peace offering to the one and a drink offering to the other.

I remained in this city longer than was my habit. Why I never knew. Sometimes God has overruled the drift of our lives in manner unforeseen and incomprehensible. I know now that I was not clearly conscious of the rapidity of my descent. I did not ask how long it would be before I grew careless in my whirl and flew out into space. I never seriously asked how long I could keep up the pace,

nor what would happen when I stopped. Yet I knew what must be the inevitable fate I was approaching. Other men have had similar experiences. I sensed the situation but felt no pain. How long I could have kept the pace I do not know.

I went one morning, after a Sunday's spree, almost too unsteady to stand, to my work. The boss saw my condition and said:

"Billy, you're too drunk to do any good this morning. You go to your room and don't come back until after dinner. I don't want any accidents on my hands."

I swore that I was all right and insisted on being allowed to remain on the job. He put me to work on the ground, but I was not content. I soon found my way to a high scaffolding, where I attempted to work against the protest of the man already there. Being dull of sense and becoming benumbed by the chill wind from the sea, I lost my balance and fell and was picked up for dead. But I was hurried to the hospital, where I lay for hours unconscious. The physician advised that my people be notified but no one knew aught about them. When I became conscious the physician told me his decision, but I remained silent as to my family. Some one asked me if I wished to see a clergyman but with an oath I put the suggestion from me. I hung for days between life and death, each one wondering why I did not die. A priest came in and tried to tell me that life

was about over but I silenced him. A clergyman approached me on the subject of religion but I laughed at him. Scarcely a day passed that some one did not try to speak to me on religion but each and all were rebuffed.

At times I would drift off into semi-consciousness and see all sorts of fanciful things. Then a dream would follow wherein I would be a child again and at home playing with the children or in the church listening to father and watching mother in her deep piety, and then in the family circle of worship. Sometimes I would pray out in my dreams as I did at home before our calamity. Then I would drift off into some happy experience of childhood long since forgotten and the scenes would speed past like angels of the dawn. Then—and it was true of every dream—the events of that ill-fated night crushed into my dream and I would awake with a curse. And more than once I would find a priest or a clergyman or some other person religiously inclined standing over me yearningly wishing that he or she might be able to solve the mystery of my life and help me to find peace of soul. Once I awoke to hear some one say:

“There’s been a tragedy in his life. He’s not always been this way. If we could get the right clue to his life, we’d have some hope of helping him, but until we do there’s no use.”

My rapid moral descent, my system so filled with the poison of alcohol, my tense life lived

for years, and my injury conspired to destroy me. Why I did not die is a marvel to me today. To say that God had a purpose in my life which must needs be fulfilled seems too much like egotism. But finally the turn for the better was manifest. My employer was good enough to see me started home. I took the train in an inexpressible attitude. It had been years since I had seen any of my relatives. I did not feel happy over the prospect, neither did I feel sad. I went home and that is as much as I can say. While months seemed as years, once I stopped to think, still I was surprised to see father and mother so aged. I was also surprised to see that the other children were so grown up. Some had married. The sisters at home assisted mother in trying to restore me to health. I soon saw that I was in a world separate and apart from them. Aside from being their brother and receiving their affectionate ministrations, I saw we were next to utter strangers with alien ideals and experiences. I knew they must have seen it but they made no difference of it. I was still their brother. I shrank from their society. I was not a part of their social world. For their sakes I endured it but I was ill at ease. I saw the-what-I-might-have-been but was not. Their social peers treated me with all courtesy. I would have felt more at ease had they snubbed me. Another thing which I soon noticed was that father was not possessed of much worldly effects. This caused

me to notice also that I had nothing to help meet the expense of their caring for me. This led me to recall how I had wasted my wages in sin.

Mother often sat with me and did her mending and watched me as I lay upon the cot, for my recovery was still delayed. Her solicitude was angelic. It stung me with regrets even while it had its healing touch. Some days when I would be in a chair she would stand over me and move her hands through my hair moment by moment as she was accustomed to do, while now and then a tear would fall upon my head. But she never asked:

“William, why have you done thus?” or “Why have you been so wayward and crushed your father and me so much?”

But her eyes were so expressive of love and pity and tender self-forgetfulness. Father moved about burdened with the weight of queries but never putting them into speech. He was searching the depths of Divine economy for a cause that he had been seeking for years. It was evident that he had so far failed in his quest.

But I had met my Waterloo. My system had suddenly quit. I was not a better man, perhaps, but a different man. The remarkable result of my illness was that it no longer occurred to me to drink. My appetite for it was gone. I recall no instance of hating it, but the appetite seemed to have utterly died out of my

life. Neither had I any further desire to gamble. My intense antagonism for the Church was not manifest but I did not love it any better. At times when I thought of the Church an oath sprang to my lips, but it was not always uttered. I attended church with the family without thinking. I played cards sometimes even where others were drinking or gambling but I did neither. I had not changed from principle. Necessity had acted for my reformation. Mentally I was drifting back to the normal state I might have been as regards wrong doing. Father was pastor in a town utterly strange to me. Nothing there reminded me of my soul tragedy. I was treated kindly because I was my father's son and because I had been ill. I did not think to turn over a new leaf. The old leaf had been burned out. I seemed moored to what I did not know.

Sometimes I sat and sat and tried to think but I was too weak in body and too blank in mind to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. I endeavored to solve the problem of my defec-tion. I wondered why that particular trial should have come to our home, and at such a time when I was not able to surmount it. I tried to form some sort of a conception of God out of the debris of the years, but it was all old material. I had no new thought on which to draw, no up-to-date knowledge to clear my

darkened mind. I asked no questions regarding this, partially from temperament and partially from sheer exhaustion. I reviewed the incidents of my life until I came back to my present situation, trying to solve the problems involved but I found no solution. Yet from weariness and weakness I found a certain lack of positive worry. It got to be the same questions and the same conclusions. I knew nothing then of a scientific nature of the significance of nerve exhaustion or of moral collapse, hence did not understand my own condition.

Sometimes I wondered if I would go insane, or if I were then insane, and if others could not detect me to be so, and if I should go insane, would I try to end my wretched existence, but even these contemplations elicited no outstanding anxiety, which caused me to wonder yet more. There were times during these periods of self-study when tears came to my eyes whose appearance I could not have explained. Sometimes on retiring I would almost cry yet could not have analyzed my emotions. Of these experiences I told no one, yet they were real to me. I was living in a world which no one knew existed, which therefore no one invaded or explained. It was the only world I occupied.

I recall not a single occasion when in reviewing my misspent years there was a single thrill over the recalling of any episode, nor the

awakening of any desire to re-enact any experience. I saw them all as trees walking. I did not seem able to hate myself for my sins, yet I felt myself forever done with them save their fruitage and the haunting memories they afforded. I was able to see that the condition I had reached was mainly due to the course I had pursued but I was too far spent to have any particular emotional reaction from the realization.

My parents were so happy to have me home, and so sorry to have me suffering so great misfortune that they did not offer any condemnation for the wasted years. But others whispered theories among themselves. This was not a numerous group, but in every community their progeny reside. I overheard some talking concerning my career, of which they knew nothing but concerning which they speculated, and their speculations were specifically erroneous. Drinking had been my sole dissipation and this had left no peculiar marks upon my face. If any had appeared, my illness had obliterated them. The only report which reached the parish of my father was that I had fallen from a high scaffolding while pursuing my trade and had hovered for weeks between life and death. But there are always some whose imagination is sodden, who are never entertained except as they delve into the crass. But my becoming conscious of their imaginings through overhearing their conversations

aroused no resentment in my own mind, and I never mentioned to anyone that I knew what was passing between such.

They for whose opinions I might have cared treated me with the utmost kindness. They also made no demands upon my time and energy. I never had been socially inclined, hence felt no responsibilities, and none were laid upon me. Between yesterday and tomorrow I was suspended, little caring toward which goal I would ultimately tend, wondering not at all what fate tomorrow might offer. I was like a shoulder which had been out of joint until the sinews had begun to shrink. I had been snapped back into place, and the attendant soreness was almost gone but the arm was still mainly useless. What would be the ultimate result was more than I even considered.

Days followed days and became weeks. Weeks followed weeks and became months. And months were on their annual pilgrimage for the second or third time and finding me still at home yet far enough recovered to earn my way at lighter work. Slowly and silently the world without was calling to me in accents I never before had heard. Almost imperceptibly the wander-lust was drawing me but it was a pull so strange I felt myself a being in a new world.

CHAPTER III.

The Uncharted Way.

It finally began to dawn upon me that my parents were anxious for me to give up my wanderings. They seemed so glad to have me at home that they began to intimate that there was enough thereabouts to interest me. My own position in the matter was practically nil. I gave it no thought for weeks. I was just drifting out of one day into the next. As I grew stronger I took up some of the chores about home and little by little began to do bits of work in the town. Odd bits of carpentering among other lines of tasks engaged my attention spasmodically. What the morrow might offer me or where it might find me I did not consider. I had followed no constant purpose in life and what forces had impelled me in the past seemed gone, never to return. I appeared to have come back home to begin life all over again. Can such a course be accomplished? It is a fond dream. Is there not an Elysium for the failure? That is, if he can retrace his steps? But what if the sands of time have obliterated the winding path?

One day mother and myself were alone in the house. Mother was a woman of quiet demeanor. I said little. Finally she laid aside her work and inquired, "William, would you like some fresh buttermilk? Mrs. McCarty sent some over by Dorothy while you were

down town and I put it in the cellar to keep it cool for you."

"Yes, always," I answered with avidity. She started and I arose to follow her. The outside cellar way was shaded by an old cedar tree in which was a blue-jay's nest. I sat upon a bench beneath the tree which caused a deal of scolding from the blue-jays. Mother emerged from the cellar and stood near me while I drank the cool contents of the tumbler. When I had drained it mother drew nearer and began to move her hands through my hair as she did when I was a lad. The blue-jays ceased scolding on her approach.

"William, you remind me so much of brother Milton," she began presently. "You look as he did. Your quiet disposition, your voice, remind me of him. When you were just a little boy we could see the resemblance so plainly. And I used to wish that when you grew up you might choose to do what he so desired to do. But—some way—some—some unforeseen—calamity—injured you so much," she finally finished brokenly while the tears fell upon my hair. I sat in silence looking at the grass.

"Milton has been dead twenty-seven years today," she began. "It seemed when he died I could never live over it. We are never prepared for the crucial tests, although we fancy we are and profess to be resigned to any fate. But when the burden rolls upon us we groan

under the weight and cry for relief. But we must each take up the cross and with aching shoulders and bruised and bleeding feet climb the steep of Golgotha in bitterness of soul sometime, somewhere." She paused a few moments, then continued, "But, thank God, the blessed Christ trod the rocky slope before us and removed from the way many a stone."

To me father's religion was ministerial, but mother's religion seemed inextricably entangled with her motherhood. After a brief pause she resumed, while still caressing my hair:

"While with the passing of time the distance between myself and the unreturnable years widens, yet they grow dearer to me. Perhaps it is because my fonder dreams were there and I had not learned that at times the world could be so cruel. But some things of the past are so woven into my life that memory will be one of my most cherished servants till all our dead hopes arise to live in new-blown worlds. Time tends to steal our loved ones out of our lives to leave but dim photos of their loving, almost indispensable selves. This is sorrow. But the dreams which we dream which never come true cause the greater tragedy in our lives. The death-pangs of a vanishing ideal are so sharp, so bitter, so doleful. The swan-song of a fading aspiration is like a funeral chant at the open grave of a lost hope. O God, teach us to train our powers for

the forward look. If there be no hope there, then all is lost.”

Presently she began to sing with quiet dignity, yet almost plaintively:

“I will sing you a song of that beautiful land,
The far away home of the soul,
Where no storms ever beat on that glittering strand,
While the years of eternity roll.

“O, that home of the soul, in my visions and dreams
Its bright jasper walls I can see,
Till I fancy but thinly the vale intervenes
Between that fair city and me.”

After a brief pause my mother, unconsciously still caressing my hair, continued:

“That unchangeable home is for you and for me,
Where Jesus of Nazareth stands;
The King of all Kingdoms forever is He,
And He holdeth our crowns in His hands.”

Again there was a pause during which a kiss upon my hair mingled with the tears that were falling.

“O, how sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain;
With songs on our lips and with harps in our hands,
To meet one another again.”

“Mother,” I inquired after considerable silence, “You never told me anything about Uncle Milton.” “Why, dear, didn’t I ever tell

you about your Uncle Milton?" "Not that I remember." "Well, how strange. Well, perhaps, after all——. I don't know why I didn't."

I detected a heartache in her voice, but I remained silent. Mother seated herself upon the bench beside me and began:

"Your Uncle Milton was three years younger than I. He was never ill much but was frail. He was converted at ten years of age and soon after announced he would be a preacher. He went away to school when he was twenty. That year the small-pox broke out in the school and he volunteered to nurse the victims. He soon contracted the disease and died. Your father and I were married when he went away to school. Soon after brother Milton's death you were born. I have often wondered if that had not something to do in your life——."

Soon she returned to the house and I aimlessly wandered down town. I do not think one thing she did or said was premeditated. It was just the outburst of her feelings pent up for years.

As I grew to be well again a restless spirit seized me. It was much different from the spirit which drove me from Provost years before. It was the restlessness of a soul unattached to either virtue or vice save in a measure. I may have been something like the man from whom some devils had been cast yet

unoccupied by angels. At last it became apparent that I was contemplating leaving home again. The storm of protest was largely unvoiced but it was lowering in its compulsion of love and solicitude. I started this time toward the older centres of the country following a news item that building programs were large. I soon had employment but not being able to adjust myself to the personality of my employer I went to a coastal city seeking a job. I was strangely impressed with the crooked and short streets. No one seemed to know directions. I came again and again upon reminders of historical incidents or characters. But I saw no one needing a carpenter so I took a car for a suburban city. I had never heard such a Babel of tongues before. I also recall that the sight of so many men in various stages of inebriation were disgusting to me. I had seen so few drunken men since my illness that I felt I was in a world utterly new to me. I finally turned to my seat-mate, a decent-looking fellow, and asked why there were so many drunks aboard the car. His reply was:

“Oh, it’s this way. The towns ahead of us are dry. The city is wet. So especially on the late cars, and most especially on Saturday, bedlam almost reigns.”

His language was less elegant than expressive. I listened with unwonted interest. It was the first time in my life that I had taken any interest in the subject of alcoholism from

the standpoint of disgust for it. I had begun to tittle at it before I was of an age to think of its baneful effects upon a man.

"Now there's a fellow," continued my informant, "I'll bet the boots on my feet that that fellow"—pointing to a half-drunken fellow nearby—"has beer in that package at his feet." My eyes took in a hasty survey of the drunk and his luggage and then the feet of my informant and I noticed he was wearing shoes.

"Have these towns been dry long?" I queried.

"Not long, but they're —— sight better dry than wet," was his curt reply. "Look at that guy," I said half in disgust and half in amusement. A man too drunk to keep awake was in the act of laying his head upon the shoulder of a woman seated next to him. She seemed both amused and astonished.

"Oh, pshaw, I don't know the drunk but the lady is a resident of the town ahead. That is her husband talking to her and laughing. He is an expert painter and carriage trimmer."

This incident fastened itself upon my mind so deeply that I can see it now in all of its ludicrous outlines. I think I never saw anyone capable of the variety of expressions which the woman had in the few minutes she was encumbered with the drunk man. Then the drunk's excessive efforts to apologize for his mistake, then his falling into a stupor again and repeating the offense. After wondering if

I had been such a fool in others' eyes when I was drinking, I turned to other topics of thought and failed to notice when any of the three alighted.

I had known something of the difficulty for a stranger to secure a job. I had no cause to remain in this place when I arrived. It was utterly strange to me. In other years I would have gone on. Why I remained here I do not know. I have often felt that more than one poor fellow who meant well has drifted into the saloon and then to the devil because he had been given the cold shoulder when he was honestly looking for an honest piece of work to do. This tramping, tramping, tramping the streets day in and day out, in sun and wind and rain and snow, and all the while seeing one's little horde of earnings go is an experience not to be desired. I do think that if there be any verse in the Bible fitting for a sermon concerning the unfortunate it is this: " . . . laid Him in a manger because there was no room in the inn." If Jehovah "knowest our frame (and) remembereth that we are dust," what must be the knowledge of the Son of Man in this regard who suffered the heartaches to which this frame and dust is heir? Was He not poor? Was He not homeless and even bedless? Was He not buried in a borrowed grave? And when one considers that in all the Holy Land there wasn't a safe place for the Infant Messiah and that his earthly guardian had to flee with him

into Egypt, it gives a fellow a little hope that maybe after all he who hath "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" has a land of refuge for the discouraged and the homeless. And that even those who are more or less justified in kicking the social, economic and political order might find a refuge where they could recuperate from the injustice and begin the struggle for bread and butter with renewed hope and self-confidence. Ignorance and hardness of heart are the twin barriers between men and Eden.

Alighting from the car I went into a bank to make inquiry concerning work and was turning to leave when called back and informed that a contractor was just leaving. I overtook him and began:

"You are a contractor?" His answer was in the affirmative. "My name is McMasters, William McMasters," I continued, "a stranger here. I am a carpenter and wanting work."

"Never been here before? What recommendations have you?"

"No, sir. None at all," to both his questions. "But I'm willing to begin at what wage you think fair."

"That's square enough, but I have no need of more men just now. I'll take your name and address," proceeding to write.

"Wm. McMasters, but I'm not located."

"Very well then. My name is Kahn. You'll find me easy enough. I live in Interlaken."

I've never seen him since. So near and yet so far from work.

I left an ad at a newspaper office, the first time I had ever done so in my life. Why, I do not know. I do not recall that it seemed an odd thing for me to do it. As I was leaving the office a little man wearing glasses came out. He had a most friendly manner.

"Stranger here, are you?" "Yes, sir," I replied.

"Well, sir, this is a fine city for a good man. I know it like a book. Been correspondent on this paper for years. Are you a church man?"

"No, sir," I said disinterestedly.

"Well, we hope you'll be. I am Sunday School Superintendent over on Walnut Ave. Here's my card. Come over to see us." But I did not go.

The city puzzled me. Streets crooked and in the suburbs poorly improved. Here a street turned out for a hill. There it swung around a lake. Stone quarries in the city limits. Rock and water every few blocks. But industrially it was a busy place. I thought that surely I could get a job as I saw some construction work going on. I began to think within a day or two that I had about covered the city in search for a job. I stood on the corner a bit out of the down-town section one afternoon scarcely conscious that I had stopped when I saw a little, old man riding a bicycle and seeming to be in a great hurry and yet having time to

speak to every man and boy on the way without alighting from his wheel. He finally saw me, looked at me earnestly, drew up and alighting, came close up to me with a sort of nervous energy and natural good will beaming from his eyes and even seemingly trickling from his long beard. Extending his hand he said:

“My boy, you’re a stranger here.” “How do you know, sir?” I answered testily. “Whom do you think I am?” “Adam or Noah, for anything I know,” I answered nettled.

“That proves it. That proves it,” he said, laughing. “Every man, woman, and child in the city knows me. I’m Abram Henderson, a sort of city missionary. And what is your name? And are you a Christian?” “William McMasters. No, sir.” “No doubt your parents are religious.”

“Yes, sir. My father is a minister.”

“And you not a Christian? How strange. I’ll see you again. God bless you. Good-bye.” And mounting his wheel with that nervous haste he had he was gone. Presently it occurred to me that I had been talking to a man who professed to be a minister of some sort and that he had had the audacity to say to me, “God bless you,” and I had not noticed it till he was gone. I then muttered, “The devil,” and walked on.

I was soon overtaken by the police van and arrested, much to the objections of the driver,

a big-hearted looking fellow, who talked like an Irishman. He felt sure I was not the man for whom they were looking, but to no avail. I was hurried off to the police station and briefly examined and then locked up. After a few days I was released. It seems that some man was wanted in an adjoining city and the police of Seabend were instructed to be on the lookout for him. Officers from the neighboring city arrived and declared I was not the man wanted. The evening of my arrest a special column and headlines appeared in a now defunct paper about the success of the local police net in catching a man greatly wanted. But nothing was said about my being released, but as I had concealed my identity I had little fear of its militating against me in securing a job.

As I was leaving the police station following my release, the veteran driver slapped me on the back and said, "Well, I knew we had the wrong man but I couldn't get the boys to see it. But you do look like the pictures of Sporgis and you do look as if you had traveled a pretty swift pace."

"I have, sir," I replied, then caught myself. It was the first admission I had ever made of the sort.

"Better stop it. It may catch you up some day when you can't come clear. There's little profit and big risk in acting a cuss in anything." He again slapped my shoulder until it

ached but I felt no resentment. But his words kept recurring to me for some time: "Better stop it: it will catch you up some time when you can't come clear." "There's little profit and big risk in being a cuss in anything." "Little profit and big risk." "May catch you up some day." "You can't come clear."

But who was this big-fisted, great-hearted blue-coat? They called him Thompson. I came to know him better in later days. He was a man for men. But finally I recalled that I had no job and little money. And I began to see myself hungry, homeless, penniless. It is true that many a man has lost sight of heaven in an effort to stay his stomach. It is true that there are self-made criminals and it is also true that some criminals are born out of the social order. But enough of that here. I was out of a job. What was I to do? Gentle reader, what would you do under like circumstances? You say you would starve before you would steal? Were you ever hungry, homeless, friendless? Oh, yes, I could go to another town, but it did not occur to me to do so. Maybe the next town was no more favorable to a stranger. Walk the streets for hours looking for a job and grow weary in body and mind. And suppose that you had a wife and children—. What then? Heaven alone can prophesy. Perhaps, after all, you would recall the religion of your youth and the voice of faith would whisper in your heart:

“I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.”

And as you walked you would offer a prayer to the God of your fathers to keep you and your loved ones from famine and from the disapproval of society. Some have prayed this with faith and some without faith. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” But a gnawing stomach and a child’s cry for bread have stilled the voice of God in more than one masculine breast. “My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

We have heard many things about the social Gospel and we have seen men conscientiously striving to inculcate the principles of Socialism. We have come to know ministers who gave up the regular work of the ministry to spread the Gospel of so-called Christian Socialism, thinking they were doing mankind service. For all these we have a profound respect for their good intentions. How much error there may be in their teachings and program we leave for wiser men to determine. But we clasp hands with the man whose heart bleeds for him who suffers, for him who appears to be the butt of the vested interests of any age or land. We, too, have suffered. If any responsibility therefore can be laid at our own doors, some of it also could be chargeable to the conduct of others. Our comment is: for

shame upon him who in his frenzy or discouragement lends encouragement to the forces which would damn him.

But there came into my mind like a gleam of light from another world, as I was leaving the police station, that I had gained nothing but rather had lost all in the reaction I experienced regarding the sins of the leaders of my father's congregation. Maybe some of them said as they saw my moral decline that perhaps my parents had been derelict in the training of their children else their eldest would not have become the moral failure I had become. I saw then and there that I had hurt rather than helped my father's cause and that added remorse to injury beyond anything I can portray. I seemed to be in a daze from then on for a period of days. Mentally I felt as one must feel who has an arm out of joint. I heard things indistinctly, I saw "men as trees walking." I was seeing myself a fool.

To see oneself a fool may be the beginning of wisdom but it may be a long time before the culmination. The more clearly I saw myself thus the more helpless I felt myself to be. I did not know how to escape the pit into which I had fallen. I could not lift myself out with my own bootstraps and all ways of escape appeared destroyed or removed. I did not curse my lot. Such anathemas were of the past. I was dumb in the face of facts. It was the first time since that fatal revival meeting that I had

seen myself as at all blameworthy regarding my own dilemma.

Then there began to rise before me the years of my innocence. I slowly began to experience a homesickness for their return. The thrill of their spiritual healthfulness at times possessed me. They came to me in dream and loitered for hours the following day. In the presence of this I was dumb save that at times I cursed my fate that they were gone forever and that I had some responsibility in their going. I did not understand their recurrence, hence knew not of what use to make of them. After a time they appeared less frequently and their influence waned although I did not completely lose the consciousness of their having been.

It was a long, long way from the innocence of childhood to the position I held as I left the police station and during the days following. I scanned that abysmal distance more than once with a shudder and wondered how any man could ever have traveled it through. I wondered into what sort of a state of soul one must enter to make such a journey possible, and to this day I am not sure that I know. I do know that I made the decline, then woke up to my deplorable condition.

But I have discovered by experience and observation that no man ever flew off the proper course of life at a tangent who sooner or later did not strike an immovable barrier and stop.

Regardless of the angle of departure and the momentum he sooner or later halts—usually with a thud. It is then that he wakes up. It may be on a bed of affliction; it may be in an infirmary; it may be at the mourner's bench; it may be beneath the hangman's noose; but he stops, then wonders why and how it all came about. I stopped. Stopping is not reformation. It may lead to that, or to suicide. But it is not reformation. And no created thing ever formed an orbit of its own regardless of the pulls of the rest of the universe. We are not so independent as that. It is a question as to which sun we will rotate about. Let us remember that. And if we will not rotate we will smash into something headlong. The universe is too well inhabited for us to miss the smash if we fail to rotate.

The social order helps to determine our orbit. No wonder there are communists, socialists, social service advocates, anarchists, pioneers, and what not. It is the soul's reaction toward its centrifugal pulls which makes them. Before Christ came there were too many universe catastrophes. Too many worlds were smashing head-on, too many suns were burning out and crashing, too many stars falling, too many worlds ablaze from too close approach to consuming stars. And even today there are too many lives which are orbitless, thus far failing to collide with another influence. I was a soul out of its natural orbit

crashing head-on, crushed but not destroyed utterly. I lay wrecked at the feet of circumstances unable to reorganize. And I have seen scores of such unfortunates in the years succeeding. And I have seen the fragments of such lives crashed and scattered to the four winds of Fate. In the final reckoning will judgment be passed upon the reassembled personality or upon the disparate parts? Let him speak who has wisdom. But in the book of infinite years are the names of stars next to extinguished whose light and orbits have long ago been lost to the race.

CHAPTER IV.

Jennie.

But I was looking for a job as carpenter. Failing in this I decided to seek other employment. My money was running low. I tried shops but either they were fully manned or I was refused because I was a stranger. I seemed to be an industrial extra. In Utopia that would be impossible. Wherein lies the cause of the industrial extra? As I tramped those city streets I sensed that something was out of joint, but I had no solution. Like many another I had been living on the plane of the temporal and had tackled no deep problem. I might have cursed the social order and contented myself with the expletives. Besides I was not conscious of any great social or economic disturbance. I did not see myself as one amidst a nation-wide throng of unemployed. I knew I was having difficulty finding a job but I did not sense that others might be also. I spent some little time seeking this type of employment. Giving this up I at last secured a job as roustabout in a department store.

One day one of the proprietors said to me:

“What is your trade?” “I’m a carpenter,” I replied.

“Then why don’t you work at it?”

“Because no man has hired me.”

Did I belong to that group spoken of by The Master in the parable? Does not that parable

refer to the economic order as well as to the spiritual? What the proprietor had in mind he did not say. I soon forgot the occasion.

One incident I well remember: One morning early a slightly stooped old man came in with nervous haste and spoke to every one he knew. Then after shopping he espied me sweeping in one of the aisles and coming over to me put out his hand with,

“Good morning, brother, it does me good to see any one so industrious and with so hearty a will.”

“I learned long ago, uncle, that when a job was to be done it was a vast deal easier done if one kept in a good humor and trained himself to enjoy it.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” he laughed. “You’re a philosopher. How I wish some Christians could work on that principle. I suppose a man with your view of life must be a happy Christian.” And he gave me a hearty grip of the arm.

“No, sir, I’m not a Christian at all.”

“How strange. How inconsistent,” he sighed. “A man with that optimism. How can you do it?”

“I don’t know, uncle,” I said under some embarrassment. “The kind of Christians I’ve seen didn’t act optimistic.”

He eyed me sorrowfully a moment, then replied, “Didn’t they?” He then took my hand and continued, “If you ever need help to find

God and will let me know—I'm Abram Henderson. Everybody knows me. God bless you, brother," and he was gone.

In the meantime I had figured out that he was the same old man who had greeted me on the street when I had first come to Seabend but he evidently did not recognize me. But, strange to say, I did not feel that there was any cant in his remarks. He seemed so utterly free from hypocrisy and so natural that I accepted it as a matter of course.

This incident was followed a few days later by one similar. The old man came chasing (and I use the word chasing as most indicative of his manner of progress) through the store and found me again sweeping. Coming over and taking my hand, he said, "Still sweeping? Well, whatever work needs doing needs doing well and is honorable. Things have to be cleaned up sometimes. Our Lord, though He was Lord of the temple, did not think it beneath His dignity to clean out the temple so that folk could worship with proper reverence." And he was gone while all I had said was, "Yes, sir." Just what I meant I do not know. But a new thought came to me and haunted me for days. This old man had classified me with "Our Lord." I was sweeping the store. He had cleansed the temple. And he had not said "My Lord" as if he alone possessed Him. He had said, "Our Lord," as if it were a partnership affair. But who was this

old man's partner in the ownership of the Lord? I could not tell. Finally a thought stole into my mind from some invisible, mystic source and framed itself in my mind like this, "The old man means you. You and he own Jesus Christ." The thing so startled me that I threw up both my hands and in doing so dropped the mop so that it fell to the floor with considerable clatter.

One of the clerks looked up and said:

"Why, Billy, what ails you? We all thought this was a dry town."

I looked confused and all the clerks near laughed while I picked up the mop and resumed my work under difficulty. Two new things hung in my mind. That old man and I were partners owning Jesus Christ. If that were so I had been letting my property go down and he had been bearing the brunt of the company's business. Had I been fair? The other thought was: Jesus and I belong to the same guild. We were both cleaners-up. But where did He work? Why had I not seen Him. This question, like the other one, received no answer, but I kept going over them for some time. In later years I have thought much on, "For we are laborers together with God."

There might be some pleasure derived from writing character sketches of the various clerks but I shall refrain. The girl at the ribbon counter known as "Jennie" soon engaged my attention. She had a model type of beauty.

When she talked her face lighted up. But it was phosphorescent rather than incandescent. She had a ready wit and we were soon acquainted. I had never craved society but sooner or later men and women enter that state of mind. I was in that situation. Jennie's vivacious temperament offset my retiring disposition.

My Sundays were spent thoughtlessly. I went to church if I happened to be with those who went. Seabend had a commodious beach and I loved to swim and went to the beach or the lakes near by when I was free. The splendid or simple services of the sanctuary meant no more to me than did the ocean or the sunset, and I am sure that I did not seek the ocean from a sense of awe and the sunset scarcely occupied a moment of my time. Sometimes I chanced to hear a street corner orator speaking in favor of no license. I listened a while without interest, even though it recalled my own dissipation. I was concerned with no problem so long as I was at work. I felt a certain civic restraint and had begun to realize that I was self-dependent. I had never sworn off drinking but I never drank any more. My childhood dreams remained in the haze of my consciousness but they had no dynamic influence over me. I had better health than formerly and was enjoying the only semblance of contentment I had since becoming a man.

Once only did I get stirred and that was when mother wrote me that father was ill and she was very uneasy about him. With an alacrity unusual for me I rushed to a telegraph office and wired her that I would come at once if needed. Her reply was that it was not so serious as that, chiding herself that she had given away to groundless fear. The storm of anxiety which had been brewing in my heart gave way to my wonted indifference. But I began to write home with some regularity much to the joy of my parents. But it did not occur to me to pay them a visit. I was so accustomed to being away from them.

Finally I secured a job as a carpenter under Browning, a contractor. I had been away from such employment long enough to feel a bit awkward with tools, but I was soon doing my work almost automatically.

There is something in human nature that is beyond the power of explanation. Soon after this I fell into the habits of the suburb in which I had taken up residence. It was neither from principle nor impulse that I began occasionally to attend church. Others were doing it. As I recall the experience no lasting impression seems to have been made on me from attending, unless it were some indefinable, cumulative influence. If I were asked as to the service I would reply, "I can't say," or "I didn't notice" or something similar. This attitude came to be commented on by others.

In one of the churches a little man was very busy whose attitude attracted me after some number of times attending there. I was not sufficiently attracted to make inquiry concerning him, but finally I concluded he was the little man I had seen on my arrival in Seabend in the newspaper office.

One day while working on a job on Broadway I had just gone up with a bale of shingles when some one called from below:

"Good morning, boys, your house looks completer all the time. Every time I pass it shows improvement."

"Yes, sir," heartily responded the boss. "We hope to have a very decent house when we're done." The boss's attitude made me feel that the old man was known to him.

"Well, who's your new man up there?" inquired the visitor as he espied me.

"That's Billy McMasters. He's taken the place of Schmidt who had to go south with his wife."

"Poor Schmidt, he's had a hard time. He deserves a better day."

"Yes, sir," replied the boss, "he's had a hard time, and he's a good man, too. I never had a better carpenter than Schmidt."

"I don't doubt it. Do you know, Joseph," addressing Browning, "I married Schmidt. His wife was Hattie O'Neil, daughter of City Treasurer O'Neil, who was killed in a train wreck a few years ago."

“I didn’t know that.”

In the meantime I had discovered that the passerby was the old man who had spoken to me about religion and I felt a sudden sinking of heart and this was increased when I saw him make for the ladder and climb it like a gymnast till he had placed himself alongside of me and taken my hand in his nervous grip.

“Why, brother,” he exclaimed, “I’ve seen you before. You’re the man I saw sweeping the store at——.” I nodded to this and he went on, “And you’re doing as well here as there. That’s the right principle, brother, and you belong to a noble company of laborers. Our Lord was a carpenter, you know, and I’ll venture to say He never drove a nail crooked nor sawed a board too short, nor left a pin out in order to hurry through His job. God bless you. God bless you, brother, and make you like the best Carpenter God ever made.”

With this he turned and almost slid down the ladder, his descent was so rapid, mounted his wheel and was off.

“Who’s that old duffer, Billy?” called one of the men from below.

“Search me,” was all I said.

“Why, the way the old gent made over you I began to suppose that he was some relative who was about to remember you in his will.”

This caused a general laugh, but Browning said, “That’s Abram Henderson, an old preacher who holds services out in some of the

park additions. Nearly everyone knows him."

But the men watched me for some time as if trying to solve the personality or the past of the new carpenter. The old man had spoken to all but why he had particularly signalled me out neither they nor I could tell. But the old man had taken particular notice of me every time he saw me. Once again he had implied that he and I were part owners of Jesus Christ. Once again he had implied that Jesus Christ and I belonged to the same guild. Once we were cleaners-up. Now we were builders. But if He and I had ever worked on the same building I had not known it. My mind seemed to be in a whirl and I drove shingle nails like a house afire. I could explain nothing to myself but I felt a deep and peculiar influence within me.

One Saturday afternoon I went back to the store where I had worked and among other clerks who greeted me was Jennie. She fired a volley of questions at me as to my whereabouts. Finally she spoke to me about some entertainment for that night. We went. I learned where she lived, not far from where I was rooming. She was enthusiastic about the performance. I was not. I think a man can about burn out his powers for enthusiasm. I must have been that man. Jennie was all enthusiasm. She never had any normal moments. I came to wonder how she kept up her pace for exuberant outbursts. Her life was a

series of explosions. Yet I could not see that she ever suffered any ill effects from them. Whether or not the explosions were due to such a vast subterranean power or to an abnormally weak resistance the reader must ere-long determine for himself.

Once in a while that evening the old man's reference to Jesus and me belonging to the same guild came to my mind. This had haunted me so much of late and did much through the show. It did not occur then that this was Saturday night and that Jennie was supposed to be in the store. I afterward learned that she had excused herself on the ground of being ill.

Sunday afternoon we walked among the hills. It was not as I had walked among the hills in my childhood and early youth. Those days seemed but dim and haunting memories. The hills no longer had any mystic charm for me, nor was their language intelligible to me. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" in nature. I do not know what Jennie saw among the pine-clad hills. She never said. She was a perpetual fountain of words and exuberance. Some folk are silenced in the presence of majesty, and some folk like Simon, son of Jonas, on Transfiguration Mount, are hysterical and voluble. At least Jennie was voluble but whether the hills had anything to do with it, I do not know. She was a good girl but to say that her soul was trained to hear the voices of the gods is taking liberties with one's

charity. I did not hear the gods speaking. I did not hear the rustle of the mystic gowns of nymphs and nyads among the leaves. I could not see the fairies kissing the wild rose and the Solomon's Seal or any other flower. Indeed, I did not know what flowers grew wild there nor could I tell when I had arrived back in town whether or not I had seen any flower at all. My mind was not particularly on Jennie. I was too indifferent, too dead to weigh anything or be affected by any influence. I was like the Church that had a name to be alive and yet was dead. Yet God's out-of-doors calls us ever. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Why not worship God out-of-doors where the sunset is refulgent with symbols of the Holy City, where the brooks are minia- tures of the River of Life, where the birds are prophecies of the heavenly choir, and the gray, old ocean is a representation of the crystal sea whose shimmering waves gambol on the golden sands of eternity's shore. But so per- verse is human nature that no doubt many a soul would build stuffy, little houses in as near out-of-the-way places as possible and close themselves within, unconscious of the material temple of God not made with hands, or more impious still become enamored with the grandeur and the beauty of God's universe and worship the creation instead of the Cre-

ator. But I walked through the glorious displays of Providence and saw neither the provision nor the Provider.

Some men stand before a grandeur of nature and see nothing but the physical fact. Others study it in terms of convertibility into cash. The superstitious fancy it is inhabited by demons. But occasionally a man stands in its presence with bared head and heaving breast and cries within himself, "He moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm." And many men pass by it a millenium of times and see nothing. Such is the diversity of human nature and human insight into truth. The truth without a man must find its correspondence within him else it is not grasped, or if it be grasped it will be but to be garbled. I have seen the even sun shining upon the lakes of Seabend and saw nothing but the glare which hurt my eyes. Again I have looked and me thought I saw a prophecy written upon the water of the shimmering of the crystal sea. It was not the lake which had changed nor the even sun. I have heard the sighing of the wind in the pines near Interlaken, and sometimes me thought it was the sweet music of Paradise wafted to me on the breath of the heavens. In the days before I heard the sigh and heard nothing. "Ye sought Me not because of the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." And the

man who is full of bread is not full of wonder, while without wonder there is no appreciation and devotion. The music of the Pliades reaches not the ears of the dense of soul. To this day I can hear the frogs in the lake near Interlaken church and be thrilled. How they call to mind my associations of which I must later write, which associations were foregleams of etherial worlds.

"Do you like the theatre?" asked Jennie.

"Yes, I suppose so," I replied.

"Don't you know?" with emphasis on "know."

"I hadn't thought about it, Jennie," I confessed.

"I do," she said with feeling. "I just rave over it."

"Do you?" I queried abstractedly.

"I wish I were an actress," she went on, taking no note of my query. "There's nothing I'd rather be than an actress. It is all so realistic, you know, acting the part of real folks, showing their loves and hates, and making folks jealous of you, and having rich men sending up bouquets with their names on them. That's the life for me every time."

"It would be interesting, I suppose," I said trying to appear not indifferent.

"It is positively stunning," she continued with growing emotion. "Then after while to fall in love with some wealthy man and marry

him and go to Europe where he would have a villa. My, that's the life for me."

"I hope you realize your dream," I said.

"So do I," she admitted. "But I'm not going to turn down all my friends waiting for the event to arrive, because I'm not an actress and only actresses marry like that."

"Do they all marry like that?" I inquired.

"Oh, I suppose so. All I ever knew or heard of. But don't you like the theatre, Billy? How romantic for me to be an actress and you to be a rich man and come to the theatre to see me perform and then to send up a bouquet to me and I come out to the footlights and curtsy to you while everybody applauds, and then we marry and go to Spain or Switzerland," and she began one of her periodic light fantasies on the sidewalk as we went along, holding to my arm and humming to herself and looking never so sweet.

"But wasn't the play great tonight, Billy? I was so mad at the villain I wanted to kill him. And his wife, the dear little heroine, I just wanted to rush right in and snatch her away from him and carry her off home with me, or better still, to some lovely refuge among the hills where her husband never, never could come. Didn't it make you just positively long to do something brave, Billy?"

"Not especially," I replied.

"Why, Billy, why not?"

"It was all too unreal," I said indifferently.

"Unreal?" she exclaimed. "Why, what do you mean? Don't lots of men act like that?"

"Probably," I said.

"Then how could it be unreal?"

"Because in real life the thing goes on under our very noses and no one cares a cent about it." I said with more emphasis than was my wont.

"Cares nothing about it?" she again exclaimed. "Why, I'm sure that I do."

"Jennie," I said, "did you ever see in real life what you saw tonight on the stage?"

"No, indeed. How could I?"

"Go where it takes place almost every day. I could take you into homes in this city where men beat and half starve their wives and children, spending their money for drink. I can show you misery and poverty and tears and disgrace in this city enough to last you a lifetime."

"Do you mean down in the west end?"

"Yes, in part."

"Oh, but I wouldn't go there," she said with aversion.

"Why not?"

"Because I am a decent girl."

"There are decent women who do go trying to help such folks. And some of the women who have to live with drunkards are decent and so are their children."

"Goodness me, I couldn't do that. It would scare me to death."

"That's the unreality of it all," I rejoined with some emphasis. "It is one thing to grow indignant over the make-believe. It is quite another thing to go where the reality is and get mad enough about it to stop the hellish thing. I go to the theatre as a pastime. I know it is unreal and therefore I do not get worked up. What's the use anyway?"

"Billy, you're the limit," she said in open-eyed wonder. "I wouldn't go to the theatre if I couldn't laugh and cry over the episodes of the stage."

"Probably not," I said with my wonted indifference returning. "But I've seen too many realities, too much hell on earth, to thrill over a hell on the stage. Painted villains aren't one-tenth as bad as the actual, and stage heroines are just suffering for salary and applause, while the actual heroine suffers for nothing. I've seen her."

"Where, Billy?" she asked, her emotions subsiding.

"Everywhere," I replied sadly.

"Have you been in many places, Billy?"

"I've been from the gulf to the lakes and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi," I said.

"You've seen some wonderful country and cities, I know," her emotions again arising.

"I suppose I have," I said soberly. "But I've seen more of hell than of heaven where I've been."

"You were never a drunkard were you, Billy?" she asked sinking into a serious mood again.

"Do I look as if I had been, Jennie?" I said, smiling.

"I should say not," she rejoined with decision.

"You won't want to ever go to the theatre any more, will you, Billy?" she inquired with trepidation as we neared her home.

"Why not?" I rejoined. "It shuts me in from realities," I finished.

She looked at me a moment as if in doubt as to my meaning, the doubt not being removed she appeared to dismiss it from her mind and to assume her lighter attitude as she said:

"Good night, Billy," with a coquettish turn of her head and with her lips pursed in the most bewitching manner. With my usual awkwardness I took her hand, saying, as I did so:

"Good night, Jennie."

A certain little pout was to be detected, but with a wave of the hand and a "Goodnight, Billy," she was gone.

I stood watching her disappearing figure a moment, then turned toward my own room. I was not accustomed to the society of women. Whether she were a queen of femininity or just a painted and vibrating automaton, I did not know. Whether I had certain indefinable emotions because she was she or just because I had never known the influence of a young

woman before, I did not know, but I was moved. Emotions strove for expression. I went home with a lighter step than I had ever known. I sat in my chair for many minutes reviewing the evening. I saw again the painted villain and the artificial heroine. Then I recalled our conversation regarding the play. I saw also many incidents of my past where men were made brutes by drink and their wives made martyrs and their children beggars. I recalled what little impression such knowledge had upon me save on rare occasions. I thought of my own states of inebriation, then that indefinable sense of satisfaction growing out of having been in the company of a woman, a sense which surprised me, and I exclaimed, to my immediate astonishment:

“Well, thank God, I wasn’t married in those days.”

The morrow found me in my wonted mood. The play, the woman, the fact I had been glad that as a drunkard I was not married, all failed to disturb the vacuum of my inner being, and I pursued my task as carpenter without sensing there might still be in God’s universe one or two spots under the sway of emotion.

CHAPTER V.

The Guild of Jesus.

But if I had been going to church infrequently, I went even less often for Jennie preferred the open air. The religious services seemed tedious to her. The sermon was too long, or the minister scolded, or was too narrow in his views, or made folks uncomfortable. But I did not philosophize in those days. I wonder now that I got along as well as I did with such an absence of thought. We were much in each other's company. It was not a matter of love, at least on my part. I cannot say that I was hungry for comradeship; I just got to seeking her company. I do not know why. It did not occur to me that she might come to love me. I did not feel indispensable to her. It did not occur to me that she would ever love a man. I had never thought of love in my life. I had never seen it work in human experience—the love of a man for a woman, or vice versa, in courtship.

The words of the old preacher sometimes came to me with considerable force and occasionally I nearly staggered under their power, but they received no volitional response from me, consequently they were obliged to bid adieu until a more convenient season if such were ever to come.

One Sunday night we went to a nearby church. Why we went I do not know. Neither

of us had ever been there. We found the house crowded. Several ministers were present, all of them being strangers to us. I did not know the import of the service but it turned out to be evangelistic. There was a lengthy preliminary of song and prayer. Finally the pastor arose and announced:

“We have within our city a minister who, although a comparative stranger, has begun to endear himself to all. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the Rev. Mr. Markson, of Interlaken, who will now preach for us.”

The name was new to us. Of the ministers before us we did not know which one was introduced. But he arose and in a sedate but awkward manner began to read the story of the Prodigal Son. It was an old story but he read it differently. The man himself was different. He showed he had been a farmer. He took us to the field and set us down in the hog-pen alongside the degenerate Jew and we smelled the odor of swine and felt the sharp hoofs on our bare feet. We grew hungry and nauseated at one and the same moment. We ate ravenously of the husks yet were hungry. Then the coming to himself, his trying to slip away from the hogs and his failure, his break for the fence, his running down the road haunted by the squealing brutes, his first sight of home and father, and the feast. Such rapidity of movement, such vivid description,

such boldness in denouncing sin, such tenderness in speaking of the father's love, we had never heard. I felt sure I must go up and confess my sins. It seemed to me the whole audience would stampede to the front to seek God. I felt sure he would call for seekers, and others acted as if they were ready to go. But, no, he turned about and sat down. The pastor arose and announced a song and dismissed the meeting. I grew faint and blindly staggered out of the church.

Jennie, who had sat throughout the services toying with her gloves, with an impatient little pucker on her lips, looked at me curiously and finally said, when we had reached the open:

"Billy, dog-gone you, if I don't believe you more'n half got religion tonight." And she assumed a sort of injured air. I said nothing in reply to this, which seemed to nettle her and she pouted:

"I don't have any use for a man who talks like that—comparing us to a lot of hogs."

"Maybe he was damned near true at that," I said, half testily. It was the first time she had ever heard me swear. I immediately apologized, which fact she neither acknowledged nor ignored.

"Billy, I guess you'd make a dandy preacher."

"Imagine your teaching a Sunday School class," I rejoined semi-seriously.

She laughed at this for she was seldom serious; then she said with more spirit than was her wont, "Well, if I were running a church, I'd twist the noses of some of the old dames."

I was astonished at this but made no comment, so she soon fell into her wonted fairy-like mood. Jennie had a dancing intellect. It appeared she could have tripped over the gossamer wings of a child's fancy and never mislaid a feather. Probably that was why I sought her company so much. I do not know.

But that Prodigal Son hounded me for days. He tracked me to bed, to work, to Jennie's home—everywhere I went. The parents of Jennie saw my perturbation of mind and watched me closely. I sensed it rather than saw it. One day as I neared the house unnoticed, I heard women's voices quite a bit above normal tone. Pretty soon I caught Jennie's voice:

"But he acts so queer. I can't get him to even smile. I hate to be in anybody's company who is so dog-gone serious. It makes me feel like I was at a funeral all the time."

"Now, Jennie," and this was her mother, "I have been watching him myself. I think I know men a lot better than you do. He is in love with you and is just beginning to find it out but he feels uncertain. So you had better act pretty carefully, especially if you like him."

"Would he make a good catch, mamma?"

"Well, he's got a good trade and no bad habits and he ought to make you a good living. And if you'd not be so giddy all the time you might catch him."

"I hate being so serious and as for house-work, I despise it. But I don't believe he sees it. He never sees anything anyhow."

"You can't tell about that, Jennie,"

But I strolled into the house, not taking cognizance of the import of their conversation. But a few days later I heard the mother say to the father:

"It'll be a wonder if she ever gets him, for she never shows any disposition to do house-work. But he may be blind like a lot of men are."

"That's what ailed me when I married you, dear," said her husband, laughing.

"Hiram, I do believe that you are as frivolous as Jennie."

A few days later we two, together with Jim O'Brien, a fellow-carpenter, and Clara Simpkins, a chum of Jennie's, were walking on a winding street. Coming to a parting of the ways we swung in toward the lake in a motiveless frame of mind. The afternoon sun of winter was glorifying the face of the lake which shone with mirror-like depth and quiet and nothing seemed more beautiful. Everything, even the scraggy, old evergreens that were growing out on the point, looked divinely encompassed as if some kindly disposed heart

was trying to veil their defects. It was the first time in many a year that I had any thrill in the presence of natural beauty. We passed through the cut in the hill and came out almost in front of a little chapel that stuck its heels into the side of the hill as if it refused to be shoved further down the slope.

Ahead some distance was a man whose form at once seemed familiar to me but he stopped at a home and was soon admitted. Coming toward us was a woman of uncertain age, rather well preserved, judging by her quick motions. We met at a corner. I suddenly threw off my natural reticence and asked her if that man, indicating the one we had seen entering the house, were the minister.

“Laws, yes,” she said, “That’s him. But ain’t I seen you somewhere? Sure, I saw you at,” indicating the church, “some time back. You two sat across the aisle from me,” indicating Jennie and me. “But say, the preacher just more than exploded about them hogs, didn’t he? Seems like they were comin’ to get you sure. But, pshaw, I’ll bet he never made that sermon himself. They say he gets all his sermons out of a magazine. The woman where he boards says she reads some of his sermons on Monday from that book after he’s preached them on Sunday. He don’t have no time for anything but money and the girls. He studied for the ministry till he met the woman he’s goin’ to marry and she won’t be a preacher’s

wife, so he's changed his mind and is studyin' to be a doctor. He's just preachin' now to get money to finish his education. They won't have him here next year. But say, did you ever hear him sing?"

We shook our heads mechanically while Jennie grew impatient to move on, Jim looked amused and Clara giggled.

"My," she continued, "he sings like the angel Gabriel. Never heard the like myself, and I know lots of folks who say the same thing."

Having delivered herself of this eloquence, she bustled on.

"Begorra," said Jim, "who was that old simpleton?"

"Why didn't you introduce us, Billy?" giggled Clara.

To this I said nothing but I was undergoing the ravages of a hurricane within. With a silent expletive of profanity I crumpled up in spirit and felt all my mainstays giving way. The story of the Prodigal Son burned my soul like a red-hot plate. I had been building up a hope of which I was scarcely conscious, and now the very message that had stirred me to such depths had been delivered by a man who was mercenary in purpose, who had sacrificed his prophetic anointing for the kiss of a woman. In all my indignation against religious people I had never lost faith in my father as a minister. But here it seemed as if I had

had to stand by and see my dearest friend executed and I could not lift a hand to stay his death. Where we walked from that corner I do not know. The girls chattered and Jim interspersed with his Irish wit but I was a million worlds from Seabend. That woman's tongue was a venomous serpent pouring its death fluid into my veins. Jennie finally said petulantly and yet with much justification:

“Billy's sick and I'm going to cut out walking today. There's no fun trying to keep step with a dying man.”

I left her at her door and went to my room and was soon in bed, for the evening had worn on, but I could not sleep. I groaned and wept and cursed by turns, but I did not think to pray. It is not an easy thing for the prodigal to find his way back to the father's house unassisted. Indeed, it is not an easy thing for him to make up his mind to go back, or to convince himself that the way is open for his return. But just as I was finally drifting into unconsciousness, I seemed to be on my knees and looking up toward mother's face and hearing myself say after her:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”

During the night I dreamed I was a child again at home, that I was attacked by some monster and on crying out was rescued by my

mother. I awoke with the imprint of mother's arms about me and her kiss upon my forehead. The next morning I awoke refreshed with the halo of the dream upon me. I did not recall the occurrence of the day before for quite a while. But when I did a feeling of gloom over the facts of the previous day mixed with joy over the dream filled my heart, and out of it all I felt stronger for a time, but a feeling of having been robbed finally won the mastery and I sank into a state of dread despair. I wondered how I could have slept so well and arisen so refreshed. I had yet to learn, "He giveth His beloved sleep."

I wonder now as I look back over the years to that week how many of us have a faith subject to the transient virtue of the honesty of one man. Where is Markson today? Why should he have had such a grip upon my destiny? Why did that old serpent-tongued gossip make such a showing in my life? Why can't we reach up toward the invisible through the Span of Life from the Bethlehem manger to the Olivet ascension? "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" I was in a worse situation than a blind Samson feeling for the pillars of Gaza. I was not alone blind. I was also weak, and with no memories of former exploits of strength to encourage or guide me. I was almost like a man blind from his birth with no one to lead him to the alley of the alms beggars.

Some days passed, I know not how many, for they dragged like snails out of tomorrow into yesterday. Each morning I dreaded the day, each evening I welcomed the night. For although the night was sometimes haunted by spectres, nevertheless I often drifted in dream into childhood and would live over the years of my innocence of sin and my ignorance of wrong, and I walked among the angels as I had walked in my fancy when a lad. But all too often those dreams crashed into the revival my father had tried to hold, and I would awake with a start, cursing with such vehemence that more than once Irish Jim would sit up in bed in a dazed condition and exclaim:

“My God, by the adorable saints, I thought I was in purgatory and pursued by a regiment of devils.”

But Jim didn't tell. Poor fellow, he thought I was on the verge of insanity and he would look at me with deep concern and try to muster up courage to ask me about it or suggest I see a physician. But his courage would fail him and he would break off in the midst of what he had intended saying while tears would fill his eyes and he would turn away utterly baffled. But I, always reticent, never gave him a clew.

Jennie and her parents began to manifest a change of attitude. They grew more friendly, if possible, than before. I can now see that they were expecting me to mention love to Jennie, but I was too disturbed then to weigh

their attitude. Then they and she began to grow distant toward me and Jennie manifested impatience. At times it seemed she was about to shake me, yet didn't quite do it. But the times I would call she would have Clara there who remained until I would leave. If Clara was not present her parents sat with her during my visits. During such times Jennie would seem friendly but her father carried on the conversation. She had excuses for not going with me. She withdrew arrangements after she had promised to accompany me. She sometimes would be out when I called. This I noticed with some uneasiness, but I did not conclude she wanted me to quit coming. She was the only woman in Seabend I knew and I was not by temperament or experience fitted to get acquainted with another. I did not make a confidant of her, but as I had no confidant, and never had had in all my life, I sought her as a sort of refuge. At times I was on the verge of asking her to marry me and I am sure she sensed it, but it was so incongruous to me that I dared not express my intentions. This seemed to disgust her. Neither she nor her parents were at home with a serious topic of conversation and this began to nettle me. Those were hungry, terrible days for me. I came to see they were ignorant of the soul battles of a man. I saw we were rapidly entering different worlds and thus were drifting apart.

This worried me for I felt I would thus be utterly adrift if the breach became fixed. All this added to my confusion of mind, and increased their perplexity and growing distaste for me.

How long after this I cannot say, for time dragged so heavily and cruelly across my aching heart that it seemed eternities long, I started down town to look after some hardware for Browning. I had walked, for there was no street car in sight, and I met Jennie near her place of employment. She appeared not to see me but I ignored her attitude and spoke to her.

She replied, "Why, Billy, what are you doing here at this hour? Have you gotten into one of your moods and forgotten yourself?"

"Not at all," I said, taking no notice of her thrust, "I was merely looking for good company."

"And whom did you expect to meet here?"

"Hoping to meet your very self," I answered with mock chivalry, again concealing my recognition of her thrust.

"You've been so deucedly serious for so long, how can you endure to be funny today," she said with considerable contempt.

"It is a funny world we're living in," I rejoined, still concealing my mental observation of her unfriendliness.

"Did you just find it out? And whom do you refer to?" she inquired as if she began to suspect I was making a personal retort.

"Everybody but thee and me," I said perfectly composed.

"Save your compliments for somebody else. I've wasted too much time with you now. I'm going to work." And she was off.

It began to dawn upon me that from some cause she was wearying of me. I could not blame her. In fact I did not think of that phase of it. I was like a drowning man who tries to save himself at whatever cost, counting not any inconvenience it may cause another. "Self-preservation is the first law of life." And I was primeval. So it did not occur to me to cease calling at Jennie's house.

On the way back from the station I stopped on a corner for a moment while some vehicles passed. I fell into an abstraction and was aroused by a friendly slap on the shoulder and there, with bicycle in hand, stood Abram Henderson with his genial smile and his hand extended for a warm clasp that he had given hundreds of life's wayfarers standing at the crossways of hope and despair. His presence gave me a shock for I had not thought of him since the tragic sequel of the sermon on the Prodigal Son. Oh, yes, now and then some word of his stole in from memory and whispered itself into my soul, but I was too soul-weary to give audience. Is it not true that

again and again the angel of peace sings in sweet tones:

“Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

But we listen to the harsh noises about us that are blatant and gritting, while the angel has sung to no purpose. How often have we paused in the mad clamour of our battles to discover that all along the Master has been saying, “Peace, be still,” but like Elijah of old we do not hear the still small voice until the lightning and earthquake and tempest have gone past.

The old man took my hand, and looking at me in his fatherly fashion, said, “You’ve been suffering much.”

“Suffering hell,” I answered, only to be immediately surprised at my confession.

“I knew it. I knew it. Something told me you were and I’ve been wanting to see you but didn’t know where you lived and I haven’t seen Browning for weeks.”

“I live on Pond Street.”

“I’ll hunt you up. You’re Billy McMasters, the carpenter, aren’t you?”

“I am.”

“I’ll be there this evening if you permit me.”

I did not reply to this. Presently he continued, “Let me recommend to you our Lord. Tell Him all about it. ‘Truly He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His

presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them all the days of old.' Brother, may I pray for you?"

I faltered a "Yes, sir."

"And may I call tonight?"

I thought of "Irish" Jim with his rough, profane, and yet good-natured way: of his Catholic bringing-up, and I wondered if he—but finally I said, "Yes, sir."

"Good, my boy, at 7:30 tonight. And if you have a Bible—" Have a Bible. The one mother had put in my trunk the last time I left home, but I had never taken it out. I did not know how to read it. It was written in heaven. My knowledge was of the earth earthy.

That night he was there, and Jim was in. But half of our fears are imaginary. The old man told Jim his purpose in coming and with a reverence born of Catholic training he sat in silence. I had dreaded this meeting for since the chance meeting on the street my whole past had been before me, and the haunting devils of unbelief and of unrequited wrong leered at me. I had demanded vengeance upon those who did my home so much ill. To this day I do not know whether it has come or not. I do know now that it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." But also there had come to my mind that the old man had put me in the Guild of Jesus when he had said that Jesus, too, had suffered. The

thought had come to me that He had suffered first. Perhaps He had been a charter member and knew the whole realm of suffering. This had helped me much but I could not frame a prayer. The idea burned my heart. But that evening I was finally moved from within to tell the whole story of my life while the old patriarch sat with tears in his eyes and Jim looked amazed and dumb while his big heart heaved and pounded at its limits, then he sobbed like a child, but the old man appeared not to notice this. He seemed to be watching me solely. I learned afterward that he had been praying for me like Elijah did on Carmel that the desert of my heart might be watered with the rain of redeeming love till it blossomed into a garden of gladness. Finally when I was through and utterly bewildered, he said:

“Let’s see what God has to say to us.”

He then quietly knelt at his chair while Jim and I sat too dumb for utterance and too awed and too ignorant to move. The old patriarch lifted his face heavenward and began to thank God for His mercies, to tell Him of my need, incidentally referring to my sins, but all in a manner of confident humility that was amazing. His familiarity and yet filial devotion toward God was a revelation. He brought heaven down into our room and God was the center. We were afraid to stir until finally, and it wasn’t long after he began, the holy influences became so oppressively real that I slid

from my chair upon my knees and buried my face in my hands and began to weep. But the veteran of the Cross kept praying except that he leaped to a higher plateau of faith. In a few moments there was a sort of creak, then a wild thud. It was Jim in a state of soul-collapse dropping upon his knees, calling by turns upon the Holy Mother, the adorable saints, the Man of the Cross, but the old man was not perturbed by this method of addressing Deity, for he leaped to a still higher plateau of power and confidence. After a few moments he suddenly quit with a shout of praise and rising came to me, laid his hand upon my shoulder and said: "Brother, you really want God to have His free and full will in your life?" I answered that I did.

"Then," he said, "Tell Him that and do it audibly, believing that He is faithful in His promises."

Oh, the task he had set me to do. I had not prayed since I was a lad at home. Finally falteringly I began to stagger toward the Throne of Mercy and at last fell fainting in spirit within sight of the Holy City till angels came and ministered to me, and I was able to look up and see the face of the Redeemer and live. The room became strangely lighted and I lay back in the bosom of the promises and rested. But the struggle had been so severe. I had had so much to forget, and so much in my own life to

be restored, that the battle was fought near the gates of death.

The prophet of God then went over to Jim and whispered a few words. Within a moment or two Jim jumped to his feet, gave a shout of joy and leaped about the room like a young deer. He caught the old man in his arms and hugged him until I feared his life was in danger, but freeing himself the old man avoided him after that. Jim made a dive at me but I escaped him. Such a time of dodging and shouting was an innovation in that neighborhood. The landlady was a sort of offshoot of staid New England and she appeared at the door evidently to see who had gone insane. But when she saw Jim making herculean leaps toward her with his arms swinging like the wings of a windmill she discarded her New England dignity and beat a hasty retreat to more congenial quarters.

Finally Jim grew calm and the minister bade us goodnight and God's speed, promised to see us again, invited us to his chapel services, and was gone. He had asked us to the mission to assist him. Assist him. And we just converted. The next morning we went to a church down town, and such a service as was had. It was like heaven to us. The minister's text was, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And such a sermon,

such a sermon! How did the minister know we were to be in his congregation? Or did he know?

After dinner Jim must go tell Clara. When he did, in his abrupt and explosive manner, before he had even sat down, Clara looked dazed, then knowing naught else to do, giggled, then cried. Her parents and she were members of church but not vigorous. Before many weeks had elapsed Clara became converted and Jim united with her church. Thus their mutual fate to God together was forever sealed.

But I did not think of telling Jennie for the time being. It may have been partially temperamental. But finally I told her with difficulty.

"So that's what's been ailin' you all the time," said Jennie's mother.

"I've been troubled deeply about it all," I said sadly.

"Gee, Billy," pouted Jennie, "I don't think it fair to make every one else feel miserable just because you've gone and done something awful."

"I'm sorry about it all, Jennie, but I did the best I could."

"Well, I don't think religion is such a serious thing that one should mope around about it. I think if one does the best he can there's no use worrying."

Presently I began to feel awkward and a misfit in Jennie's home and knowing not what

else to do I bade them good evening. I never felt exactly at ease at any later time in her company. In thought and interests we drifted apart gradually. I am sure we both saw that. Also, Jennie and Clara grew less chummy, much to Clara's sorrow. Their interests became less mutual. Clara talked to Jennie several times about her own wonderful conversion but Jennie did not grasp her meaning. If at any time I mentioned aught of religion to Jennie, a chilling atmosphere settled between us. Not knowing how to prevent this I quit saying anything. But it came to be that when I called Jennie would be just going out or would claim a previous engagement. She appeared to be in my company with reluctance. When we were together she appeared ill at ease. She probably was kinder to me at that than I took the time to consider.

At last gossip whispered to our landlady that I was trying to drop Jennie. So she gave me a piece of her mind. While she was a member of church, still she had never had nervous prostration from over-attention to her duties. She condemned me for being so pious that I thought none of my old friends good enough for my company. I kept silence which appeared to nettle her all the more.

As for Jennie, she never quite dropped me. She did not tell me that my presence was distasteful to her. She seemed disappointed that I had become converted. She never could quite

understand why I of all men should be religious. Evidently there was the everlasting question-mark in her mind regarding the change in me. I am sure I never tried to force my religion upon her, but it was clear that I was different, and it was equally clear that she was nonplussed about it if not actually grieved. As to her parents, their silence was oppressive.

One night Jim came home from Clara's to find me in bed. After a deal of awkward tip-toeing to keep from awakening me, on seeing that I was awake, he cleared his throat and said in a semi-whisper:

"Billy, I don't want to cause you heartache, but have you heard the news?"

"No news that I know of, Jim," I said rising on my elbow.

"Well, Billy, I was shocked stiff and Clara nearly cried her eyes out. Jennie has eloped with Bilkins."

"Bilkins!" I exclaimed, sitting bolt upright with my feet on the floor. "Why, Jim, you're lying to me. He's got a wife and three children."

"If this be the last breath the holy saints ever give me, I'm telling you the truth, Billy," said he excitedly.

"Well," I said slowly after several minutes of tense silence, "Bilkins was a band-box gentleman. He's turned the poor girl's head. I feel sorry for her. She was too good a girl for

such a fate. But where did they go, Jim? And what does his wife say? And what will her parents do?"

"They took a west-bound train. His wife cried at first, but she said she felt sorrier for the girl than for herself because Bilkins never had supported her and the children."

"Well," I ejaculated, "That sort of treatment will soon cook Jennie's goose. But what of her parents?"

"I don't know," said Jim. "The reporter went to the house but could get no response."

But I could not sleep. The days we had been together filed past me in silent review in spectral fashion. To say that I felt condemned would be unfair to myself, but I was haunted by the past in which she figured. I arose weary and disconcerted. The landlady gave me a tirade because I had thrown so lovely a girl over, and that she had run away with a married man who gave her sympathy in her hour of despondency. To all this I made no reply. I could not understand my own feelings, therefore how could I explain them? I did not feel I should call at Jennie's home, for perhaps they, too, were blaming me. I was told that the mother shut herself in her own home and refused to see anyone and the father was utterly silent. Whether they ever heard from her no one ever knew. When a death occurs, the emblem of death is removed from the house soon after the burial, but here

the atmosphere of the grave beclouded the premises day after day.

But Jim and I decided to move. I felt I wanted to get away from the associations in which Jennie had figured. She was the only woman who had ever had any appeal to me and I was wounded, yet utterly at a loss to understand. Then, the landlady had arrived at the conclusion that we were fixtures which she could dust off at will, and this attitude became intensified after Jennie disappeared. Jim saw a chance to get a room nearer Clara's home and church and he was impatient to be off. Jim had joined Clara's church and was soon at work. I had joined none but went to the mission chapel where Abram Henderson ministered. Jim had begun to call him Father Henderson, which greatly pleased the old man, and we soon settled to calling him thus. Father Henderson put me to doing bits of religious work, which were undertaken in fear and trembling, for I naturally shunned publicity. He also began loaning me books, which I seized upon with avidity. Jim was too much given to being in motion to find much joy in reading but I was reading everything I could get.

When Browning learned of our conversion he told us he hoped we would make it so unpleasant for the rest of the men on the job that they would all have to become Christians or else we would have to quit. We did not quit. I cannot say that all became Christian men. I

soon divulged my new experience to my mother. Her reply was heartening.

“I knew all through the years that the Lord had selected you for work in His vineyard, and I was not surprised at the good news. In fact, ever since you left home the second time I had been definitely urged to pray for you until recently some Voice whispered to me to cease praying as my prayers were being answered.”

Father wrote:

“I’m so glad, William. I never could tell why you changed so when you were a lad at home, and why you became so wayward. But I’m so glad you’ve returned. My heart is overjoyed. I never came to the defense of the doctrines of our blessed faith with greater joy than I now write you this letter. I never saw the preacher you say won you to Christ, and you did not write to what sect he belonged, but I love him no matter what his creed. Indeed, I have changed with the years a great deal. Now I could love the man who won you to Christ even though he were a Jew or a heathen if all you say of him be true.”

As soon as we left rooming on Pond Street and moved down near LaFayette Park I went home. Forgive me if I do not narrate the reunion. Most of the children were married or away in school, but we were all at home together for a few days’ visit. How dependent father seemed to be upon me. How lovely was mother with her overflowing but quiet joy.

My brothers and sisters who had never seen me grown as a brother should be had to get acquainted with me all over again. But it was done so unobtrusively and with so much love that it was like heaven to me. I felt myself a new creature in Christ to a degree I had not experienced before. And when I left home again the tears of parting were lighted up with smiles of assurance. That home-coming event has been as a beacon light to me through the years and I can see its beams glinting along the upward path toward that friendly Door that is thus far not ajar for me.

CHAPTER VI.

From Among the Tombs.

One evening while I was on my way alone to the evangelistic services Father Henderson was holding in his chapel, I heard a peculiar outcry from the Catholic cemetery to my left, but thought little of it. In a moment or two it was repeated. It sounded like one in deep agony. I paused to listen. It was soon again repeated. I leaped the fence to seek its source. The evening was too dark for one to see far but by following the outcries I soon came upon a figure huddled upon a grave leaning against the gravestone. I immediately concluded that the individual, a girl or woman, was suffering from dementia, probably over the death of a loved one. Standing still as long as I could, not knowing what else to do, in my agitation I finally touched her arm and inquired:

“Are you in trouble?”

A severe shudder passed through the crouching form which seemed to sink lower, then began to sway back and forth, and such moans followed as I hope I shall never again hear. I felt sure my hair was rising to a perpendicular. But in a moment I repeated my query as courageously as I could and with intense feeling. To my repeated inquiry she threw her arms aloft and almost shrieked:

“O my God, trouble? O merciful God, have mercy on my soul.”

I drew back for I concluded I was surely in the presence of an insane woman and felt uncertain as to what she might attempt next. Noticing that I had moved away, she exclaimed with equal pathos:

“Don’t stay near me. I’m not fit to be in anybody’s company. Go away and let me die. O my God, why can’t I die and end this wretchedness?”

I then instinctively felt that she was not altogether insane and that her reference to her own unfitness was due to some misfortune or misstep, for I had had about that feeling myself once when I was lost. But to see a woman in such state of mind put me at my wit’s end. I approached her finally, after wondering what on earth I should do with her, and said:

“Sister, I don’t know who you are but God knows and there never lived one so downcast that He did not love and yearn to help.”

“O my God,” she shrieked, “There ain’t no God, or else He would not have let me come to this.”

“Sometimes, sister,” I replied, “He is thwarted in His love and care by evil influences that for the time get between Him and those He loves. But rest assured He is ever near to assist those who will trust and follow Him.”

“O, He can’t help me and He don’t care for such as I am.” And she began again to throw herself back and forth and moan until I feared

she would faint from sheer exhaustion. I really thought she was on the verge of insanity. But I knew not what to do with her when she entered one of her paroxysms but to let her wear herself out. Finally I gathered confidence to say:

“Come, sister, you must go with me and not stay here.” But my own statement startled me for where could I take her unless to the police station and she didn’t impress me as being of that class.

“Go with you,” she moaned, “No one would have such an one as I am near him. You go and leave me to die here; for I am going to get out of this misery pretty soon.”

“Sister,” I said thoroughly alarmed, “the way you probably intend getting out of this misery never produced a cure. It only promises suffering more terrible.”

“Do you mean hell?” she shuddered.

“I mean that very thing,” I answered gravely. “There has been more than one soul gone that route who might have been saved had he put faith in Jesus to make all things new. It is an eternally dangerous expedient for a soul to dodge the ills of life here by hustling himself into the next world without God’s consent.”

“But what am I to do?” she cried, “I can’t stand this much longer.”

“Sister, Jesus came into the world to heal your broken heart, no matter what the cause.”

"Oh," she sobbed, "but you don't know how wicked I've been."

"No, and it isn't necessary, but God knows and He sent His Son into the world to redeem all that we might be born into a newer and a better life both here and hereafter."

"Oh, if I could but believe all that, but I've been so wicked." And she began to moan and throw herself again.

I realized that I was in a peculiar position. Suppose that some one should hear us and investigate. And suppose that this were indeed a scarlet woman. Were there not those who would desire nothing other than to see us together in that dark cemetery? So I took her by the arm and almost lifted her to her feet thinking of what Jennie's friends might say should they learn of the incident. I said to the woman kindly but firmly, "Come with me."

I fancy that had she resisted I would have left her there, for I am sure she had not seen my face and could not have recognized me on any later occasion. But she yielded to my commands like a weary child and I stood her on her feet. She did not ask what I intended doing. She appeared to feel that her salvation lay in her doing my bidding.

After considerable search we found the gate. But where was I to take her? I did not know. This query must have arisen in her mind for presently she asked, "What will you do? You can't take me home with you for I'm not fit."

Nothing of that sort had entered my mind, but as she spoke it occurred to me to take her to the revival. Surely, thought I, she needed its influences. Then, I reasoned, the women of the church would know what to do. We did not go much farther until I told her my intention. In fact it was the only thing I knew to do. It was so dark I could not tell the condition of her costume, but as soon as I told her she first objected, then planted herself squarely in the sidewalk and refused to proceed. After I had almost given up in my efforts, she shuddered and began to weep, then asked:

“Do you think there is any hope for such as I?”

“Certainly there is hope for all who will believe,” I answered.

I succeeded in getting her to within a few yards of the church when she sank upon the ground and began again to moan and to swing herself and I saw I could get her no farther. I then asked her if she felt I was a real friend to her in her need and on her replying in the affirmative I secured her promise to remain there until I returned with a woman who would also be her friend. I then entered the chapel and returned with one to whom I had whispered:

“Mrs. Blue, there’s a woman outside the door who seems to be in great distress.” Mrs. Blue was “true blue.” Mrs. Blue took her home with her and I re-entered the chapel.

But as I sat there I did not know much that went on therein. My mind went over the events just preceding. To tell the truth, I found myself wondering how I ever said the things to the unfortunate being about the mysteries of mercy which I did. I was so recently redeemed. My father had been long on doctrines but had had little time to preach redeeming love in a manner that could be applied to human need. I had not heard enough sermons since my conversion to form any complete ideas of the depths of redeeming love nor of the wisdom of Divine mercy in dealing with the unfortunate. I did not answer my unexpressed query but a great peace came over me that I shall never forget.

After the service I felt I should enquire if I were expected to render any assistance to the Blues. I told Father Henderson and Mr. Blue and together we went to the house. There we saw the woman seated, almost crouched, in a rocker. Mrs. Blue introduced us. Mrs. Blue told what little she knew, how that she had brought the woman home, had given her lunch and made her as comfortable as possible, feeling sure that Father Henderson would come over after the benediction. Father Henderson seemed to understand the woman's real need, and he gently led her to that state of mind where prayer was the logical action. Then we knelt. He had asked for no confession of sins for he had never posed as a father-confessor,

but he felt that God's mercy was more efficacious where confession was made to Deity. He began to pray by thanking the Father for His love and solicitude. He offered thanks that these virtues had found fullest expression in the sacrifice of Jesus. He spoke of the universal offer of mercy. Then Father Henderson seemed to pick the poor soul up and bear her on the wings of prayer to the altar of mercy. The woman began to weep after a while, but at first her face was ashen with terrible but silent grief. Such a pitiful wail of despair and shame followed that it seemed we must leave the room for relief. But Mrs. Blue went to her and putting her arm about the afflicted one drew her to her heart. It was her first refuge from her sorrow. Mrs. Blue tried to keep her from relating her story but could not. Put together it ran something like this:

She was born in rural environment in moderate circumstances. Her parents died in her childhood. She worked out while still young but finally married a good but poor young man. They had no children. Finally they came to the city to better their condition and began to do well, but her husband grew ill and the small savings soon went. He died leaving her in debt. She, utterly unfamiliar with city life, sought work and at last secured employment in a large concern at scarcely living wage. She moved into a coop-like room to cut down expenses and economized in food almost

to starvation but could not pay off the debt incurred during her husband's illness and burial. Her creditors harassed her. At last she went to the manager of the concern employing her telling him all and asked for an increase in wages. He told her he could not pay her more but wished to know if she did not have friends in the city. Utterly ignorant of his meaning, she replied that she was a stranger there.

Her wages were raised. But an attention from the manager was begun unobtrusively at first, which grew with the weeks. She was a woman unusually beautiful and still young. To hasten to the conclusion, they became engaged and were married. Everything was done to make her happy and money was spent upon her without stint. True, he did not take her out much, but she naturally shrank from social affairs anyway because of her rural life earlier lived. After many months of supremely happy life with him she chanced to learn that he already had a wife from whom he was not divorced and that he had never really married her. It was a frame-up of some sort, but how she did not know.

The sudden realization of her disgrace and betrayal crazed her and she shot him. It was not fatal. He saw his sin would come to exposure unless he acted quickly, so he plead with her to leave him and never return for the sake of his children whom, he said, were nearing manhood and womanhood. For their sakes

and for fear that she might be sent to prison were it known she had shot him, she left. He had compelled her to take all the money he had on his person, which was no little amount, as he appeared to still have some semblance of pity for her, or else he hoped it would be as a balm for her wounded feelings, she did not know which, but she believed the former as he had been so generous with her before it all came out and he manifested so much feeling when he saw she was broken-hearted.

The account of the shooting as appeared in the metropolitan press was substantially as she stated the man had told her he would give out when the police arrived, which led us the more firmly to believe all her story. He said that he had called to see a woman about taking a position and that not finding her in he had sat down to wait. He had no idea why she had never returned. He was a man of irreproachable reputation, so his story was accepted. He told that he was in the habit of carrying a revolver and that while awaiting the woman's return he had begun toying with it, a thing he never did before and could not account for the fact that he had done so then except that he was in a hurry and grew impatient with waiting. To us there were lame elements in his published account but men in honorable and influential positions are not supposed to be doubted by ordinary mortals. For several days this woman had suffered such mental torture,

had scarcely eaten, that having nowhere to go lest her story become known, she was next to complete collapse.

"I am a lover of the city," began Father Henderson during this pause. "But I can readily see how a Hebrew, a lover of the open country, should lay the founding of the city to the charge of Cain. The city is a bloody place. What tragedies are hidden within her walls. What episodes of cruelty and heartaches lie buried beneath her ruins. What rotting sores fill the air of heaven with their stench. What screams of oppressed innocence arouse the pity and the wrath of God. I love the city but I shudder at her infidelities. When did Christ weep over the sins of the hills and the rivers? Is not the city the symbol of all that is sinful, if we are to accept the story of Revelation?

The city is not a thing of great distances but of great interferences. Men cannot see far because of intervening walls and smoke. People meet daily in one institution for labor, then separate at night, each going his own way to church, to his family, to the brothel,—to heaven or to hell. Here we see a group giving their lives for the uplift of others, across the street another group bending every energy to damn humanity. I love the city but I shudder to think of her fate."

Said Mrs. Blue, "The thing which impresses me so much regarding John's vision of Baby-

lon is the mystery which is so specifically mentioned. Does not mystery surround the city so absolutely? How many whom you meet in shop, in store, or even in church really let you know what they in reality are? Or rather, how few there are whom you ever come to know. One must almost become deranged did he allow himself to take the matter as seriously as the situation might warrant."

"You are right, sister," replied Father Henderson. "How many times I have been delightfully surprised on receiving cooperation from persons from whom I had expected nothing, and how many have caused my heart to bleed whom I had assumed to be at par who proved afterwhile to be but moral ciphers. Then I have seen some who were leaders of thought and conscience for a long season who one day turned up derelicts. Yes," he said, shaking his head sadly, "there are many unsolved mysteries buried in the city. I cannot fathom them."

"It is the sin of the city which wrecks empires. The Chaldean empire went down under the walls of Babylon. The Assyrian empire crumpled up when Nineveh fell. Israel fled when Jerusalem was sacked. The reign of the Caesars stopped with Rome's disgrace. And when America is laid in ruins it will be because of the wickedness which her cities have cherished."

Father Henderson in his prophetic passion had quite forgotten his environment and the cause of his discourse. But Mrs. Blue brought us each to the problem in hand by asking the woman if the man whom she thought she had married was well known in the city in which he lived; to which she replied:

"None is better known than he. He represented himself to me as belonging to some of the principle organizations of the city with which men are connected. It was in part for that reason, so he said, that he made me promise not to betray his sin to the world. And for the sake of his family, as I now know he has one, I have kept the promise."

"He certainly does not deserve shielding," I said with indignation.

"No," replied Father Henderson, "but the parable of the tares has many implications. On the other hand his family are no more innocent than is this woman. She has been betrayed: they have been deceived. I do not ask her to reveal his identity. I do say this, though, that if she should expose him, as he well deserves, she would find out that no one fair-minded would condemn her the half of what her own conscience has done."

"That is indeed true," said Mrs. Blue with emphasis.

The woman herself sat like one dazed. She appeared to listen to what went on out of courtesy, yet it was apparent she did not grasp it.

She received some relief for a few moments from telling her story, but the whole scene flashed before her again and she again grew hysterical and sank upon the floor in a heap, the most dejected-looking specimen of humanity I had ever seen. Then it was that Father Henderson talked to her. Some drunkards have tried the Keeley cure and some have tried Calvary cure, as Billy Williams would say. Good Father Henderson had been for years an advocate of the Calvary cure. He also felt it would cure this woman's ills. At first she shuddered at the name of God. She said that she was a Christian in her childhood but that God had forgotten her so long ago. She was assured that He had not but that He was waiting to bless her. Our confidence began to beget confidence in her soul until finally we induced her to pray audibly. With child-like candor, helplessness, and then faith she unburdened her heart to God.

With a broken heart she drank in the mercies of God famishingly. It was worth worlds to see the effects of grace upon her life, for it was a visible though not an instantaneous result. But the light of the Gospel and the expression of true womanhood stole over her face, while the smile of true peace replaced the look of fear and shame. Presently she quit praying and looked up with transfixed eyes on something immaterial and eternal, while we were silent in the transfiguration. Finally she

began to weep audibly while her whole form shook with pent-up emotion of joy and new life surging through her whole being. She sank into Mrs. Blue's arms. Then Mrs. Blue and her husband lifted the restored daughter of God into a rocker.

Presently Father Henderson said, "Daughter, have you a word of joy for us before we go?" She turned her face toward him while an unusual smile made radiant her face and said in subdued voice, "Oh, I am so happy." It could not be gainsaid. In a few moments Father Henderson turned to me and said, "William, we shall never forget this evening. We are all deeply your debtors for this occasion. But it is getting late and Sister Blue has become hostess to our new friend in Christ." Going to the woman he said, "Daughter, your faith in Christ has made you whole from your heart-break. From this day forth it is His will that you go in peace. He gave His life for you, you must day by day give your life to Him. God bless you."

We walked some distance in silence, Father Henderson pushing his wheel. Presently he said, "It is too bad, too bad. How many unfortunate people there are like she was. Sometimes I am tempted to say that the world is growing worse. There are so many men and women in league with sin ready to ruin any one upon whom they may fasten their hands. It is alarming how many girls and young

women there are who must work where none but the strongest and best nurtured can work and not fall. There should be some sort of supervision under the direction of the police department. Some elderly woman who is motherly and true, who could have police powers, who could inspect places where women are employed, win the confidence of the employees and see to it that protection from indignity is afforded them. There should be some way of arousing public sentiment in this matter."

But my car was coming, so, laying his hand upon my shoulder my spiritual father said, "Brother William, the Lord has a work for you which He will reveal to you some day. You must not be disobedient. I have a feeling that you should enter some school to prepare for religious work, one that will give intensive training but not a long, complicated course at your age." With this he bade me good-night.

I did not speak of this evening's experience to anyone. Father Henderson kept it within his own heart. Mr. and Mrs. Blue were likewise silent. In fact Mrs. Blue forbade the woman herself telling it at the time because she felt the best thing to do was for her to try to forget, since Christ had so graciously received her. But on every occasion of opportunity she spoke of the refuge she had found in Christ and how unworthy she felt and how she knew she must have been a hopeless being had

she not found Christ. Mr. and Mrs. Blue had no living children and they found great joy in caring for this renewed child of grace. They insisted that she remain with them temporarily, and, being of a practical turn of mind, the young woman soon assumed many of the household duties.

Jim and Clara came to know her and one day Jim said, "My, but that young woman at Blues is a beauty and so quiet. Her testimony does me a world of good."

"Yes," answered Clara, "she is nice looking and I like her manner and her testimony is so hopeful, but she looks as if she had been ill. I wonder if she is related to those people."

"I never heard of it if she is," I replied.

The conversation drifted to other subjects and the incident was forgotten. But Mrs. Blue was a wise guardian. She introduced her as Mrs. Blaire, of Vermont, a friend of the family, whose husband had died, and that she was living with them indefinitely. Otherwise her past was a sealed book.

Mrs. Blaire's attitude toward me was one of courtesy always. When others were around there was a reserve which would lead a chance observer to conclude that it was through Mr. and Mrs. Blue that our acquaintanceship was established. But at times there was an intangible, inexpressible manifestation of gratitude on her part, utterly free from over-attention, that caused me to know she could not forget

the large place I had had in her redemption. Once she said to me:

“Mr. McMasters, I owe you more than I do all the rest. I have never been able to understand quite how you succeeded in persuading me who was on the verge of suicide to come to Mother Blue’s at all. I wonder I ever consented to be brought. You must have been under the spell of God to have done the way you did.”

“I cannot myself tell how I succeeded,” I replied. “I was aware that you were desperate, and I grew alarmed. I guess the Father above would not let me fail. I am sure that I was too inexperienced in Christian work to have succeeded without Him that evening.”

“I can never forget you,” she replied. “I shall always think of you, if I may, as a sort of big brother in Christ coming to my rescue.”

“I can never forget you,” I said, “for furnishing me with such an outstanding opportunity to declare the mighty working power of redeeming Love.”

“I never thought of it that way,” she said, moved by deep emotion. After a few moments’ silence she continued, “I guess that after all God is able to make all grace abound toward those who have reached the lowest depths.”

“‘Where sin did abound grace did much more abound’,” I answered.

“I have never been able to understand how you of all men could have understood my

plight so thoroughly that you knew what to do and say," she said in happy perplexity.

"I didn't," I said with energy. "I felt my own adequacy to be wanting. I did sense though," I said presently, "that you were as hopeless as I myself once was."

"Have you, too, suffered?" she asked in astonishment.

"I have suffered hell in body, mind, and soul," I said under deep emotion. "I was a drunkard, an infidel, a hater of the Church, and almost without a friend."

"How did it happen?" she asked thoroughly astonished. "Did you choose it?"

"I was driven to it in early life," I replied sadly, "by the infidelity in practice of those who called themselves God's elect."

She looked at me in open-eyed wonder for some moments, then tears came into her eyes, then a smile, sweeter than which I have seen none, appeared. Arising she came over to where I was seated, and with a manner that was next to angelic she said in utter self-abandon:

"You are not only my elder brother in Christ, but also my elder brother in suffering. I am sure we shall always remain of kin."

I looked into her eyes and saw the depths of her spiritual understanding and mutual interest which will live with me until I shall see in those other eyes, into which I hope some

day to look, the perfectly spiritual and the perfect sympathy and the perfect suffering which are capable of winning the world to life and peace if only the world would scan their depths.

From that day forward I realized that we were brother and sister in spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

Beda.

I had not been a participant in social affairs since Jennie's episode. While it is true that at times I felt the need of such joys, yet my spiritual joys were a more abundant reality. Father Henderson had insisted on my reading some of his books and I was eager to know all I could about this wonderful salvation I had found. So far as Jennie was concerned I knew nothing about her. The man's wife said she would take no hand in apprehending him as he had never been any good to her, but that she would permit him to have a divorce if he really loved Jennie but she didn't believe he did. So the matter rested.

There were several roomers where Jim and I moved and quite a large number who ate where we did. One Sunday after a late breakfast I found myself on the way to church with one of the young women boarders. Nothing had been said by either of us attending church but we soon discovered the coincidence. She was primly dressed and carried herself with a dignity that was almost oppressive. Her accent was certainly that of a Down-easterner. She consented to walk with Jim, Clara, and myself to Father Henderson's afternoon service. Thence we explored the immense natural park nearby. It proved a new world to me. Jim and Clara were happy that I had again

found company even though it might be but temporary.

Beda was a native of Maine, her ancestors having landed at Pemaquid Point in 1625, and her father had the record of each male descendant from that period to himself. She was thoroughly eastern and was a teacher in the city schools. Clara soon loved her and Jim liked her. We were much together. I became in debt to her for she was well educated. I am sure I gained much from her. We explored the whole country round about. Jim and Clara usually followed us at a slower pace. When folks are forming friendships and are not just sure of the peculiarities of each other they move too fast for the rest of the world. But after they have fallen in love and mutually understand they find that the world moves too fast for them. The former couple hurries through the afternoon because, well, just because, while the latter couple saunters through the afternoon for the same reason.

We grew more and more to understand that we were to be together and others came to so regard it. Now and then some one would jokingly inquire how the case was progressing but we were invincible. Some appealed to Jim or to Clara but they were utterly impervious to all assault, declaring that everybody had his own eyes as much as they had theirs and that was all they knew. Beda was loyal to church attendance. She also seemed to enjoy walking

among the hills and through the woods or along the beach. She was not emotional but she had a taste for the beautiful, the magnificent, and the sacred. But in all this she was undemonstrative. The contrast between her and Jennie was so great that it never occurred to me that she might be any less than completely committed to God. Clara was emotional, so was Jim, while I naturally retiring had moments of profound emotional reactions but I reasoned that I had had so much for which to be forgiven.

Beda appeared to take her religion for granted. It never occurred to me to wonder whether or no she ever experienced gratitude. I assumed that she did. I could not help noticing that Mrs. Blaire grew in soul under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the mother-heart of Mrs. Blue. I noticed also that Mrs. Blaire was never negligent of the opportunity which came to her to express her gratitude to God for His compassion. I saw she was becoming a most efficient servant of Christ in winning other souls. Sometimes I found myself in her debt when I saw her devotion or heard her singing a Gospel song, for she had a rich voice and her spirit rounded out her vocal ability. I observed that she was giving so much of her time to religious work and took some pride in that fact for I could not altogether forget that the good Lord had given me a share in her recovery. I rejoiced in her joy.

But Beda did not sing much. She sang exactly right, but it did not attract attention. There was nothing abounding, pulsating in her singing, and nothing erroneous.

Since my conversion time had speeded toward its appointed destiny after having urged me on toward mine, but I felt younger than when I was but twenty-one. Another winter had passed and spring had been ushered in garbed in beauty. People were making merry in the woods, on the lakes, at the seaside. One Saturday afternoon in early summer, Beda having gone home for vacation, Jim and I started out for a walk. Jim talked mostly of Clara and their plans for the future and hoped that Beda and I might drift into love and marriage. We walked aimlessly until we came within sight of the boat-houses on the lakeside. Jim suggested a row and I was ready. We passed through the boat-house in a clump of willows and stood upon the landing. A gasoline launch was heard coming toward us in the early dusk, around a point of land. The moon was just appearing and such an evening I had never seen. Soon the motor boat stopped at the landing. The man in the boat seemed familiar and I finally concluded I had met him in a shop when I first came to Seabend, for I have always had an almost uncanny faculty of remembering people. He asked us to ride with him. Jim sprang into the boat and I had just set my foot upon the edge when over toward

the opposite shore and behind the point there came floating out into the evening a song. A man was singing, with as wonderful a voice as I had ever heard, the following:

“Ever has my heart been singing
Sweet and low a serenade;
Ever has the joy been winging
Through my soul free, unafraid,
Since I met one eve enraptured,
In the fragrant fields of June,
You who have my whole life captured
And have set my heart in tune.
Then I gave myself completely,
Saying, “Must I go or stay”
You did answer, smiling, sweetly,
“I will send you not away.”

None of us had moved during the rendition of this song so new to Jim and myself. It had scarcely floated through the silver atmosphere when from across the lake came a hand-clapping and a chorus of laughter from girls and whistling from boys interspersed with the serenade from persons in boats. We inquired the identity of the singer. The boat-house keeper did not know. The motor-boat owner said:

“That’s Markson, the young minister. He’s the finest tenor I ever heard.”

“He sure is some singer,” replied the boat-house keeper.

“Never heard anything like it,” exclaimed Jim explosively.

But the name of Markson sent a train of associations through my mind and I recalled the sermon on the Prodigal Son and I shuddered. But in a few minutes the serenade ceased, when we heard the faint chiding of a woman's voice as if someone were trying to prevent a continuation of the song, followed by a rich, masculine laugh, then the song began again:

“Dearest Mary, you have ever
Been the sunshine of my heart.
Dearest Mary, you have never
Caused love's halo to depart.
Oh, what would I do without you?
Life would be a desert drear.
There's a halo round about you
Of love-light to me so dear.
While the future has a glory
Shining from that summer day;
When I stammered my love story
And I was not sent away.”

The song was dying away in the moonlit stillness when there was a woman's scream, a man's quick command, “Sit down,” another scream and then a splash, and then a bedlam of screams and cries and shouts on the opposite bank and from boats.

“They're upset,” was the universal cry.

Portions of the pond were fairly alive with craft of all sorts and the sound of voices could be heard far and near. The quick splash of oars, the chugging of motors, the dipping of paddles, commingled with the medley of tongues can never be forgotten.

"Push off," I called hurriedly to the man in the motor boat. He caused his motor to start with such a jerk that it nearly threw us overboard. Jim and I had been in lake and ocean many times together and felt equal to any emergency. Boats were wheeling about to hurry to the spot, while men and boys were trying to swim out from shore. Forms were moving along the whole beach looking for impossible means to go to the rescue. Jim was yelling like mad for crafts to clear the way and they seemed to yield to the spell of his eloquence. I said nothing. I was thinking intently of the stories concerning this preacher, of the impression he once made on me, then of the reaction. But is it not in the presence of imminent death that the soul sees visions and speaks with immortal tongue commanding immortal forces, and cries out with supersensuous impetuosity and moves transfixed through aisles of spiritual powers suddenly revealed to its theretofore dull and leaden intelligence?

I do not suppose that Jim and I were needed to save the couple. No doubt there were others who would have arrived in time. But we succeeded in saving both lives for the woman could not swim and the man was excited. We landed them safely with the aid of the motor boat. Then Jim and I made good our escape back to the boat-house. Not until it was over and the excitement had subsided was there inquiry as to our identity, but we were gone.

After it was all over I asked myself if it had been worth our while if the man was in the ministry for money's sake, and if he really intended giving up the ministry for the love of a woman. But it was too late to follow such a course of conduct, for, in a crisis like that, man acts then reasons. Indeed, I ween that many of life's noblest deeds are performed in the spirit of spontaneous service before colder faculties have time to cool the ardor and deaden the vision of service which the angel of emergencies begets in the human heart. Who can gainsay it? I wit not. But the deed was done and the reasoning was of no avail unless to destroy in the soul the sense of satisfaction accruing to me. Two lives were saved, worthy or unworthy. The mission of man is to save life, not to destroy it.

I would not tell this were there not other events hinging upon it. To leave this narrative out would be to blur the meaning of later events. But the morning found us in our places of worship. We had agreed between ourselves never to reveal our identity. Monday brought a full account of the rescue but it was deplored that the identity of the rescuers was unknown. The man taking us to and from the scene did not know, neither did the boat-house keeper. The minister himself made public his appreciation together with an appeal to the unknown rescuers to reveal their

identity; but to no avail. And I write this narrative only after getting Jim's consent.

Work grew dull, so I went on a visit to Maine. It was a wonderful trip by boat. Maine is a paradise and to me it was a fair Eden. One pleasant day followed another. Excursions at sea, excursions into the hills, camping, fishing, made up our gala days. Beda's parents were as unemotional as the stones of their native soil but I did not feel ill at ease. Pride of birth had been bred in the line until they were self-content. It was a phase of religion with them, almost a predominant phase.

Just how deep was the nature of Beda's parents I do not know. They took much pride in education and art and I felt that nothing short of my silence saved me embarrassment. They seemed disappointed that I was not of New England descent but felt that since I was an offspring of the Scotch Covenanters I was of the elect. But I wonder how many of us have inherited the vices of the past rather than the virtues. The centres of the world's gaze shift from generation to generation. Seldom are they in one family continuously. Is this democracy asserting itself in the face of age-old tyranny? Still there are some who hide their heads in the sands of time and fancy the world is still following the tracks of their gens across the uncharted wastes of years.

My visit went past all too rapidly and I was reluctant to return to Seabend, yet knowing that within a few weeks Beda would be in Seabend teaching school. But in one home in Seabend there was quite a stir. Jim and Clara were to be married in September and Beda and I were to attend them. Jim had caught the western fever and was going as a contractor while Clara thought it would be perfectly lovely. Jim was all smiles and all flurry. I wonder he was any good at his job. He acted as one demented in his delirium of joy. Clara called him foolish and that but made him more delirious. He buzzed around like a sputtering bunch of fireworks. He was so happy that he fairly ached with joy and actually suffered from an oversupply of good cheer. I am inclined to think that the wedding day saved him from a nervous collapse. He hadn't really relaxed in mind for weeks.

I met Beda at the station. Her school soon began, but her first Sunday found us resuming our accustomed stroll. How beautiful were the autumn woods. How happy were we. At least I was and she looked satisfied. She had built around her such a wall of self-possession and had shut herself in so far from natural life that at times even I, as well as I thought I knew her, felt the abnormality of it all. But she appeared thoroughly honest in her attitude and seemed oblivious to its unnaturalness. At times she appeared artificial, but if

she were, it was second nature to her. I felt she denied her heart its inborn privilege of self-expression. Consequently much of the time I had to guess at her heart and to assume that she cared for me. This was often a torture to me, quiet though I myself am.

But we took many strolls that autumn and as neither was talkative by nature, neither suffered from the other's silence. As I look back to those days I can see I was developing in intellectual breadth. I also thought I knew my own heart as regards Beda and I guessed at hers. To guess at a woman's heart is notoriously distressing but it was my only recourse. I was in a quandary. I came to want her yet felt some intangible hesitation. It became annoying for these hesitations grew to be premonitions which would not leave, still were inexplainable. Yet the memory of those cross-country strolls are still vivid in my mind.

But the wedding came off. Clara was sweet as a picture. Jim was enveloped in a halo of wild joy which made him look like a new-born god wading through a tangle of May-day sunbeams. Beda was so dignified that one felt like bowing the knee and saying, "My Lady Buckingham, your most obedient servant." After a honeymoon in the land of Evangeline where Clara's mother was born, the Irish lover and his bride returned home to soon leave for the West, where they secured rooms in the city

Jim had selected in "the loveliest little flat you ever saw, where we live like two doves in a cote," as Clara wrote. It must have been true for when it came to billing and cooing Jim didn't have an equal outside of God's creatures who wear their own feathers.

Jim said to me, as they were preparing to leave:

"Billy, old boy, you're next. Sorry you will have it done when we won't be here to see you, but you and Beda come to see us on your honeymoon." I accepted his remarks as matter of course, coming, as they did, from Jim.

But I grew more conscious of the drift of events and became more serious in attitude for that was one way of expressing my heart native to me. I came to conclude that it was quite the thing to do, to make Beda my wife. I finally over-ruled those intangible premonitions to the contrary and set about to follow my inclinations. What was I to do if not that? I reasoned. We had been giving our attention to each other solely. I had taken her time and thought. As I look back over those years fraught with such destiny to her and to myself I see some things which I felt then but could not understand. Oft I wonder if God is not better to us than we deserve or could expect. Are not His angels ministering spirits sent of Him to us in our time of need? I wit so.

Beda seemed indispensable to me. I had never been in the company of a young woman

until I met Jennie. I could not think of her as ever being a wife. Before my conversion I did not care. Afterward I began dreaming dreams. Beda was refined, quiet, educated, dignified, careful in movement and gracious in attitude. She never enthused over anything unless over nature, and her words were few then. We had much in common in native disposition. Her attitude toward religion was staid. No one could find out if she had a personal religious experience. She had been reared to believe herself the child of God ever. She sang accurately but never enthusiastically. I never worried over her seeming lack of religious fervor. I felt she had always been good, and therefore perhaps no radical change was necessary. She wondered at times concerning the religious enthusiasm of others, but it was wonder which aroused no concern. She was so utterly self-possessed that some thought she was all shell and no kernel. Jim used to say that, if you could ever get through the shell, he believed the kernel would be found to be delicious, but could it be done? Again he wondered if it were worth while to try to break through the shell. But his remarks never sank deep into my life. She never seemed to be glad when I was with her, yet she manifested to me in her way, which I came to understand, that she was satisfied to have me with her. But no one else could tell it. Whether she loved me or was capable of loving

anyone, I did not contemplate. I gave the whole matter so little concern that even the premonitions I had were not considered seriously. I was content. I was thinking more and more of her, and I was not worrying about any possible future discoveries of incompatibility. Pity the man or the woman who proceeds to the marriage altar in the face of warnings subtle and yet clear against such a step.

But I was not philosophizing then. I was gradually loving. Beda was not as I fancied other young women were. I interpreted it as superiority and was glad that she had tolerated me. She had a will of her own that was austere, imperious. We came more and more to do what she desired. Little by little I made concessions to her until I was conceding about all the time. I saw it but did not protest. When two personalities meet there should be mutual concessions, else there is no true friendship. I know that now. I didn't reason it then, but I sensed it. True love is not selfish, but a lot of folks in love are selfish. Such are not truly refined in spirit. I am sure Beda did not realize what she was doing, but she was doing it anyway. She was unconsciously more and more accounting my personal attitude of little worth. I yielded without protest. I sensed the abnormality of it but I could not put it into words. I could not define it to myself. Probably God was trying to induce me to call a halt. But I went on. I felt more and more that I

could never give her up, yet having some indefinable fear that I would be compelled to do so. What my state of mind came to be I cannot picture. Some nights I lay awake all night lost in intense anxiety and again almost delirious with joy. I could not give her up. I could not keep out of her company. I yearned for her and yet at times felt that I would lose her. Next to Father Henderson Beda had meant more to me than anyone else since my early years. She had contributed to me so much of refinement and intellectual growth. Whether she ever knew this or not I never learned. Perhaps her unconscious tendency to be imperious was due to her knowing how much she had done for me. I never found fault with her for this imperious will. I do not now as I write this story. I have criticized myself for having so readily yielded to her, yet I never found fault with her. But if she ever had such intense feelings for me as I did for her I never knew it. And I never could tell her the exact state of my heart.

The walks we took that fall, the visit I made to Maine—such experiences are duplicated again and again, so I do not wish to have my readers fancy that I imagine myself telling a perfectly original story. I am simply telling my own story. Strolling along the beach, skirting the rocks thereabouts, delving into the woods, meandering through the parks—Oh, who has not fancied himself in love?

Father Henderson's chapel was situated in Parkway, which was in reality a suburb of Seabend. It was sheltered in a narrow valley against the hills on either side. Flag Pool lies like a placid mirror just beyond but gives a portion of its contents to a narrow lagoon which steals quietly cityward till it rests its head in the green pillow of the Catholic cemetery. Out of the quiet breast of the lagoon flows the ceaseless chorus of frog lore through the warm months of the year. But Parkway was not permitted to be a park, no matter what its name may suggest. It seemed too fitting for habitation, hence was settled by those who preferred the suburban quiet.

Nature had been rather freakish with Seabend. Her blessings in the main have been rugged rather than lovely. In certain sections of the city the artistic sense of man has more than met its match in the stubborn resistance of the rugged hills. In other places Seabend has yielded to the grace of human art. The seaward side of the city, the interlaken suburbs, besides Parkway, had lasting beauty. The hills about—who can forget them? Pine-grown and oak-clad, rock-ribbed—as sturdy as the Puritans and as conservative as New England folks of today. How I have wandered hither and yon, breaking out of beaten paths to explore lagoon or cave or glen or crag, following the sound of bird or frog into the deeper shadows or nearer to the marshy ground. How

I have done this, yet not I. We did. And who were we? I use the past tense because it is all past. It is all a memory which grows dimmer with the years, although at times it has claimed a hearing. But its messages are all delusions and immaterial.

Who can survive the withdrawal of the human touch? Man hesitates to worship the intangible, no matter how holy the idea may seem. But man will follow the tangible even unto death. This is the great rule of affection and devotion. We worship a Being who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and who can give to us the response to our longing for affection and caressing. Dreams are at best but symbols or prophecies and may awake us to joy, but the fulfillment of those dreams is what gives strength and substance to life and sustains it. But why dreams or impressions of other days come trooping home at such unexpected and unwarrantable moments bringing with them the old joys and affections and expectations, when the old occasions with all the hopes which sprang from them are long ago dead and dust, is more than I have ever been able to comprehend. They troop in upon one's own consciousness, remain for a brief period, then vanish without the mind and heart so visited having any ethical obligation regarding their appearance or disappearance whatsoever.

The songs of the birds, the call of the pheasant, the choruses of the frogs, in fact the voices of all nature are heard again and again in memory clear and yet fainter with the years. Once we heard the real voices, for Beda and I were wont to climb over those rugged hills and never weary, for something akin to love led the way. And love never requires a task too arduous of her devotees. Love finds a way for getting the things done she requires. But do deities ever die? Or do they prove deserters from the shrines where their devotees have so often gone to worship and whither they take incense distilled from the pangs and joys of their own hearts? I do not know. But this I have learned from my heartaches that love's altars grow cold, her candles go out, her ark of the covenant becomes desecrated and broken, her shew-bread becomes mildewed, her high priests violate their consecration, while her temples become spoiled and robbed and fall to decay. Then it is that some of the worshippers become atheists, while others erect altars under every green tree and offer strange fire to every passing false divinity. Idol worship always leads to confusion, while the worship of spirits is a delusion and a snare. The temple at Jerusalem is a long, long way from Dan or Beersheba. But both Dan and Beersheba would go to Jerusalem to worship in spite of the hardships of the journey if each knew that

the offering would be appreciated and accepted by the deity of the temple. But men are slow to believe and sometimes the high priest is derelict in his duty.

It was a lovely October day and unusually warm. We went to the woods again. Back over the paths we knew so well, past the familiar scenes of many a ramble. All nature was lovely. Birds were singing with spring-like sweetness tinged with a faint fear that the song might be out of season. Honey bees swam through the air with a wild abandonment of joy yet with a suddenness of departure as if fearing it would end in dismay. Squirrels barked at us as they do in April, then frisked into their dens unaccountably hurriedly. Crows overhead called in anarchistic fashion to one another, seeming to fly far into the vanishing blue without arriving anywhere. The water in the spring branches tumbled and laughed down hill like boys running from the scene of a prank, then hastened to hide in the bosom of the lake ere the mischief was discovered. Here and there we found in an especially sunny spot a violet hanging its head in an apologizing manner for the brevity of its stem, while occasionally the falling leaves scurried about us like truant boys fearing the teacher's rod. The whole environment had its influence upon me and made me unwontedly grave. My heart was at high tension, my mind was alert,

but I did not talk. Beda was in the most subconscious mood I had ever seen her. She unconsciously opened the doors and windows of the citadel of her soul and looked out and smiled and as she looked out I looked in and read her heart. We two were traveling toward a destiny. The road had many curves, so we could not see the end but we moved with an impetus which was thrilling. I was conscious of the moving but she seemed not to be. I suspect that had she become conscious of it she would have ceased to move at all. But I felt that I must tell her all and that right soon.

I shrank from the ordeal—an ordeal of joy—yet moved steadily toward it. I felt that it was also an ordeal of pain for I reasoned I could not ask her to be my wife unless I told her something of my past. I would not deceive her. I would let her know how good were my home influences, how far I had wandered astray, and how God had brought me back. There was a large element of the religious in my affection for her. As I came to love her better I seemed to see God with keener vision. It made me more seriously religious. So feeling that I should tell her all, I finally began.

I can't tell how I began, but I did get started, and she didn't seem surprised. We kept walking along as I told her, but finally stopped at a large bench-like rock in a sheltered and sunny place, where we sat down. She listened at first with much interest, then in

wonder, then in amazement, then finally—well—I began to feel something gradually slip from under my soul. My story grew difficult to relate, but I waded or floundered through it. By that time she was more dignified than I had ever seen her. She arose and looking at me in quiet scorn for a moment, said freezingly, “Mr. McMasters” (she had called me William for months), “the man whom I marry must have a clean record. Let us not refer to this subject again.” And with that she moved off toward town.

I took my place at her side to take her home. It was growing late. The birds had quit singing. The bees were all back in the hive. The squirrels were snug in their dens. The violet had hidden itself in the shadows from the evening chill. But two lone crows flew far overhead quarreling at each other while never seeming to get anywhere. The evening chill of October enveloped us in its comfortless fold like the gray sea-mist settles over the cabin of motherless children whose father has just gone to his death on unfriendly reefs in a turbid sea.

We seldom met at breakfast as I ate earlier than did she, so the day passed without our seeing each other. I could not forget even though seemingly unaffected. But a sudden rush of business made it necessary for Browning to put me over a gang of men. During this

period Father Henderson was urging me to enter school in preparation for some definite Christian service. I shrank from this responsibility but my conscience was seconding his urgings and I finally yielded. I chose a Western school. Father Henderson sensed my suffering, so I told him all. He seemed as hurt as I myself. He wept for me. He had been a father in Israel to me. I knew I could tell him all and he would understand.

I settled myself upon the westward-snorting train with mingled feelings, having but a few moments before waved an adieu to Father Henderson, who had accompanied me to the depot. But while I was settled in the train I was not settled in spirit. I was joyous almost to exuberance over the fact that I was on my way under the call of God. I was wrought up the farther the train sped from the station over the past tragic experiences. These finally gained the ascendancy over the joyous emotions as I grew weary from their struggle for the mastery in my soul. Darkness came apace and the tension increased. After midnight I sank to sleep under the opiate of weariness with the still small voice of conscience whispering peace to my embattled soul. Finally falling into a dream I saw myself in a religious service where I was trying to preach. Then I saw a woman arise in the audience and, taking her place near the front, begin to sing. The

room seemed filled with her song and her personality. A holy hush seemed to pervade every heart until men and women, yielding to the hallowed influences, began to confess a Saviour's redeeming love. No interpretation came to me of its significance but in the months which followed it reminded me of itself again and again as I suffered an anguish beyond words.

I worked my way through school at my trade. Some relief was gained in hard manual labor, religious attention, and the passing of time. I cannot say how long I suffered. I would not have it known. For months I found myself recurrently drifting into strolling of mind back over those scenes in and about Seabend. But there was an undergirding of peace which grew in beauty and power gradually obliterating the pangs and the hauntings of memory, while at times the dream of the woman singing returned in memory with its pristine influences.

It is sad how we frail folk of the flesh crave and cry for things which never come, and perhaps never should come. The result of it all is we become more refined in soul or we grow cold and cynical and pessimistic. And God forbid we should do the latter. "To those who are small by nature the call to suffer does not come in clear tones because deep suffering is impossible. The sorrow is soon thrown off and forgotten and they live on waiting for the next

experience with the same light, unimproved intelligence. Only the great in soul possibility can experience great affliction. Only the great in heart can have great heartaches." I do not say that I had much depth or much endurance. Perhaps not. Beda and I had both had our day together and each had been disappointed. I had fallen below her ideal and how great was the shock to her sensibilities I never knew. She had been trusting the blue blood of aristocracy to be sufficient. I had contaminated what of that coursed through my system. I had to rely on the red blood of Calvary. The former meant everything to her. The latter had come to be my only refuge. I was a black sheep washed of his stain. Perhaps New England had never experienced such a calamity.

I could not but admire her for her ideal, for who does not crave the consciousness of having never done wrong? "Who of you convinceth me of sin?" was uttered by One whose career we well might wish to emulate. What a shock to one when he first grows conscious that he has spoiled his life's perfect record. I could not condemn her even though she had given me a death-thrust. As I look back over the intervening years I can find no feeling of bitterness toward her. I rather condemn myself for not following those feelings of my own which I now fancy must have been premonitions against our ever being anything but friends. Whether she were ever harassed by

such feelings herself I never knew, as she seldom spoke of her own attitudes or emotions, if she ever had any emotions. I rather suspect she had feelings against our marrying but went ahead anyway. Perhaps my attitude was responsible. But it is natural to assume that in all which occurred she did what she came to suppose was quite the proper thing for her to do.

CHAPTER VIII.

Westward Ho.

My life on the whole seemed uneventful as a carpenter, beneficial as a student, stabilizing as a Christian. Some experiences stand out in my memory like evergreens in a grove of oaks. Not that everything so remembered was a perennial pleasure, but that they were perennial. I took advantage of my opportunity to visit various city churches. There was always something so majestically spiritual in the sermons of some ministers. To some churches I went and was able to find nothing but a well groomed service. I wondered why they had gone to so much expense. The attendants entered the church with about the same air they might have had had they gone expecting to meet Prince Bismarck. There was due deference shown, a courteous frame of mind was manifest, and a courteous exit was made at the close. Were they benefitted? God knows. "Like people, like priest." Like sheep, like shepherd. What was the nature of the pasture?

But I heard big-souled, broad-minded men who knew the grace of God and rejoiced. I wondered if some big-souled men who dealt with the Gospel on a small scale were not pinched into small compass through intellectual error. I have wondered if some have not been incomplete in their preaching

through a miscalculation of the receptivity of the hearers. For some hearers are not familiar enough with the truth to heartily accept and apply it to their own lives.

But I had not forgotten "the hole of the pit whence I was digged." "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Was it any wonder that I constantly felt an impulse to testify of His love among those who were in like condition to my old life, since He had "put a new song in my mouth, even praises to our God," and I believed that "many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" if I were faithful. So I attended often the missions in the city. Indeed, it was a part of my training course. Finally I became a helper in one or more of these institutions. It became my lot to assist weary and travel-worn souls into the refuge of God's love. Some of my own richest spiritual experiences came to me in these slum missions. It is wonderful how one may find the spirit of holiness in an environment reeking with the stench of moral and mental decomposition. But the touch of leprosy never contaminated the Christ for he was no idle dabbler, no curiosity seeker, but an Angel of reconstruction. I felt I was able to trace His footsteps through the underworld of even a modern city into the environment of

lost souls for whom He died that I might reveal unto them the "fountain filled with blood."

Perhaps it was because by His grace I was looking for His footsteps, but anyway, I found them there and was able to reveal them to some of the "prisoners" of the sin-infested portions of the city. I am looking for an artist who can paint a section of a modern slum with the Christ preaching the glad tidings to the poor, emaciated mortals suffering with the open sore of lust and ignorance, trying to touch the hem of His garment with the tips of their fingers, while all above the scene the halo of health and purity and heavenly power adds effulgence to the healing processes.

When the Church becomes prophet-artist enough to see there is an angel in every filth-bespattered curbstone, then the sound of the chisel and hammer in the street will announce to earth and sky that God's people are erecting a temple to the Lord to supersede the dens of vice and hovels of wretchedness now therein. The scream of the vulture, the cry of the jackal, and the hiss of the serpent will give place to the laugh of the child, the voice of the prophet, and the music of souls redeemed. Who shall say that this is not the Lord's will?

Begbie's "Twice-Born Men" is a new chapter to the Acts of the Apostles full of good cheer, good deeds, and the glorious benefits of grace. Unto us of today as well as unto them

of a former age is this gospel preached. In this confidence must the Church go forth to heal and to make alive. The culture phase of the Gospel is being emphasized today by some at the expense of the redemptive phase, but just so long as sin and selfishness and lust and evil communications abound, just so long must the redemptive Gospel be preached. "Blessed is he that readeth and understandeth these things." Many a church would become enthusiastic, redemptive, and holy were it to turn its lecture room into a rescue mission. But who of its cultured members would have the grace or the vision to turn rescuer? We are willing to give our money for such a cause but to give ourselves is the test. And would not some congregations discover themselves to be dead instead of living corpses?

One night in particular stands out in my memory. But before I mention that, permit me to relate another incident or two. I shall never forget one man who came into the mission one evening. He had been drinking heavily. He wore a Prince Albert suit and a stove-pipe hat, and had mixed, in his features and behavior, refinement and dissipation. He was a professional man of some sort, but was temporarily, at least, down and out. He maintained a courteous attitude during the service and when the opportunity was given for testimonies he arose and with dignity tinged with

drunkenness began to discourse upon American opportunity and curses. Such flights of eloquence I have seldom heard. Much of it I have forgotten but a few expressions remain with me to this present. As regards the saloon he said in part:

“The saloon—the monument perpetuating on earth that villianous thief, the prince of the region of the damned. The saloon—the curse of God, the stumbling stone of man, the Jim had selected in “the loveliest little flat you breeder of lust, the hot-bed of crime; the wedge which separates homes and hearts, the breakers which wreck the ship-of-state; tombs which are never watered with a mother’s tears of promise, which never echo with a wife’s goodbye of hope, or a child’s prattle of unconscious faith. No sister’s hand plants flowers in loving, blissful remembrance thereon, no father rears marble above them in honor, no angel keeps watch above them until the morning come and the darkness vanish; shrines where men offer the incense of purity, the sacrifice of virtue, the dove of peace, and pay their vows in the life blood of loved ones.

“Hell is the next door beyond a man’s last chance, and I am standing upon the threshold of that door. You needn’t pray for me for you can’t make anything out of nobody. I’m down and out. I once was up and in. The saloons got all there was of me. The saloons knew they had a victim when they saw me. A man with

plenty of backbone is never taken for tenderloin. My God, my God, how we play with judgment and toss pennies for hell-fire and draw straws for the chief seat in the synagogue of Satan! So wonderful is man that he can hurl defiance at God for a time, set aside God's decrees, revolutionize Divine plans, transform the Divine image into the image of the brute, and make a hell out of the wrecked fragments of heaven. But 'the mills of God grind slowly though they grind exceeding small. Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all.' And when the reaction sets in there is 'the devil to pay.' Look at me: I'm paying. Once I played the wheel of fortune, now all is lost. My wife died of a broken heart. My children gone, God only knows where. My business lost, my honor destroyed, my friends know me not. My name is Icha-bod."

With that he buttoned up his frayed and soiled Prince Albert, took his seedy hat upon his arm with a semblance of his one time culture and left the room before any of us could make out his purpose and intercept him and he was soon lost in the surging, shepherdless herd of the sin-infested streets. We never saw him again, but the impression made upon us all was so weird, and yet so sad that we sat in silence

until the silence grew ominous. Finally a drunk exclaimed:

“Well, bedad, that was some spache, be-gorra. Now when, do you wonder, did he chuck all that in his nut, hey?”

This untimely remark broke the spell of the man's influence and our service was resumed and finished. But a lasting impression was made upon my mind. No, it is not true that the blood of Christ reaches every sinner. This is the ultimate tragedy of sin. The man had been touched by the Spirit of God but he was so sin-soaked that he could not interpret the impression made. God had spoken but the man's understanding was atrophied. This is hell. “Can God make these bones live?” “With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.” I thought of my own life of sin. I felt myself a brand plucked from the burning. Thanks be to God for His mercy. If one have an understanding heart, and one that is athirst for the waters of salvation, all things are possible if he believe. Christ does for a man what he cries out in his inmost soul to attain and is not of himself able to reach. This is satisfaction of his utmost need, the answer to his sincerest desire, the fruition of his purest hopes, the substance of his choicest dream, the perfection of his largest and best self. To hear God is fortune, to meet Him is heaven, to follow Him is joy, to trust Him is

satisfaction, to obey Him is life, to live Him is character, to love Him is coronation.

But one's heart is made to ache over the number who do not believe this, or who professing to believe it do not live it, who pursue their own vanishing ideals even unto and into the grave, so blind to all which endures and upbuilds. There is the narrow way, then "there is the way which seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof" is tragedy.

One evening there came into the mission a woman dressed in the semblance of a costume. She wore a rakish hat and in her effort to be stylish she wore it in still more rakish fashion. She walked up the aisle in drunken vanity and seated herself with much maudlin dignity away from other drunks. She accepted a song-book with a politeness that might have tickled the risibles of a corpse. She tried to sing in a mixture of the operatic and the devotional. It mattered none if she were two or three measures ahead of the organ. That but added to the rakish effect of her presence. But it occurred to me that she had seen better days. She sat bolt upright during prayer as if essaying to be stiffly reverent.

But the prayer was unusual. Brother Boremus, a saint of God from some farm section, who occasionally dropped into the mission on his visits to the city, prayed such a prayer. It seemed that the heavens opened and God revealed His face to even the dullest. The poor

woman was impressed and before the prayer was ended she lost much of her maudlin dignity and assumed more of an air of bewilderment, but her hat still held its rakishly precarious position on one side of her head while the bedraggled feather or two seemed just as long and just as out of place.

Then Brother Boremus seemed unable to find a Scripture lesson, not from ignorance of the Bible but he seemed to be moving in a dream. Finally he read the story of the sinful woman who bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears. His comment was not verbally eloquent but it was a spiritual masterpiece. Its influence upon the crowd was not cataclysmic but was more marvelous in its cumulative power. Resistance was broken down. The invitation being given a number came forward, including the woman. The moment was momentous. She did not weep nor cry out nor pray. But she was becoming rapidly sober. She stared into vacancy as if listening to voices afar, while her expression was pitiable to see. Presently she began to wring her hands and to moan:

“Why did I do it? Why did I do it?”

Her eyes were dry as parchment, her lips drawn white, her figure was tense. So piteous was her plight that Mrs. Gilbrandt went to her and, kneeling, took her in her arms. The woman finally yielded herself to her new-found friend and sank against her while giving way to

tears and convulsive pulsations of the body. After a time she arrived at a frame of mind to be instructed and the outcome was a glorious conversion. This was not accomplished in a moment. The hour was growing late when she testified to the saving power of Christ. There is no possible way of explaining the circumstance except by a miracle of grace. Too many of us have a feeling that so great a sinner as she must do a sort of penance before forgiveness can be obtained. But Jesus said nothing about it when He forgave sins. He forgave the penitent instantly. Her story was told as follows:

“I haven’t always been a bad woman. God knows I was once as true as any woman. But I fell, oh, so low, so low that I lost my instincts of decency, sanity, womanhood, motherhood. Yes, I’m a mother, and O God, pity my poor, dear darlings that they should ever have been cursed with such a mother. Oh, my sweet darlings that I loved so much. God forgive me that I should ever have forgotten my mother love, but I did all that.”

With that she gave way to a burst of grief heartrending to see. Presently she resumed:

“I was born on a farm not far from this city. I was brought up in almost Puritanical strictness and economy, although my parents were well to do. We were not church-going people, attending but infrequently. My parents had not time to spare. But we were honest. I went

through the common schools and into high school but did not graduate. I entered the normal school but my parents objected to the cost, so I quit. We worked very hard to make money and saved it. A company of surveyors came through our neighborhood in the employ of a traction company and we boarded them. One of them, a student in an engineering school, came to love me and we were married. We came to this city and he secured employment as a railway fireman. Soon we began paying for a little home on the installment plan. A little daughter came into our home and three years later a little son. God never gave lovelier children to a home than were mine."

Here the woman again was submerged with feeling and could not go on.

"My husband and I never doubted each other when apart for we loved each other so much. We were poor but happy. But sometimes our desires come to outrun or progress as I have learned to my sorrow. A man made regular calls at our house to read the meter. He was courteous and dressed in spotless uniform of his craft. He came and went on his business and nothing was thought about it. He occasionally spoke, and infrequently made a few statements courteous but inconsequential. We became more and more acquainted. He was always neat, always clean, always courteous. My husband was always thoughtful but

not always neat. He did not always have money after the necessary things were bought.

“So, entirely unthoughtedly, I at last began to contrast the two men. Little by little the man grew more attentive until finally—to save a longer heart-breaking story—I went with him to the theater, then again, and again. I felt condemned and decided more than once that I would tell my husband and have done with the wrong doing. But when he would come home he seemed so unsuspecting, so confiding, so happy to be in his home that I had not the heart to tell him.

“At last one evening the man intimated that he felt I was not fairly situated in life, that I was born to better things, and that he was but sorry it had not been his privilege to give me what I really deserved. I thought of my life with my parents which was grinding, irksome, without opportunity. I thought of our economic methods in the city where everything was almost at one’s door, if one but had a bit of money. I tried to look ahead and fancied I saw nothing but hardship for years to come. The man assured me finally he was in a position to give me every heart wish. Thus I was led to become resentful toward my husband for our strict economy, until when the man suggested that I go with him I did so, feeling I was just coming into my rightful sphere in life. I left my husband and children for this

man and together we went to another city where we were to marry and live happily. But I have learned that happiness purchased at the price of honor carries a poison in its chalice which I was forced to drink to the very dregs. We went through a form of marriage and began housekeeping.

“After a time I saw that no matter how honest the man may have been in thinking that I deserved better than my husband had been able to give me, he had not the business capacity to supply it. He liked an easy job and as there are so many looking for that sort, he always reached the employment bureau a bit too late. I became undeceived and longed for the love of a man who, while not rich, was industrious and made no promises which he could not fulfill. But I feared to return. I imagined all sorts of vengeance that my husband might already have set in motion and my overburdening sense of shame kept me from writing. I knew not what to do yet felt I should die without my children.

“This anguish dragged along for months until I was forced to give attention to my own health for the sake of the innocent soul that was soon to be born into a home of dishonor. But a settled gloom came into my life and when the babe was born I was near death’s door. The babe after an unequal fight for a few weeks died. I could not recover from the illness and gloom except physically. Remorse

became a settled thing. I grew petulant and cross. The man retaliated. I wanted to leave him yet had no place to go. He took to drinking for he learned he could not keep me as he had promised and he knew that I knew he could not.

“Finally in despair and soul madness I also began drinking. I was soon in the clutches of the demon and I lost all sense of decency, honor, or motherhood. I lost the sense of the flight of time. I railed at him. I cursed him. I threatened him with violence until he left me and where he went God and he alone know. But I was a lost creature without home, hope, conscience, or God. I cared nothing for anything or anyone. I cannot tell you all my experiences during that period. It was too terrible a course of sin and since God has forgiven me I pray that in time I may forget its terrors. I’ve been gone from this city for years, I suppose. I drifted back here recently but why I do not know. I came in here tonight because it looked like a shelter. I don’t know anything about my husband and children as I never heard of them since I left home, neither do I know aught of my parents. I am alone in the world and until a few minutes ago had no hope of a better world.”

Thus ended her story. We were anxious to help her but she gave us no clue to her identity. It may have been an oversight but more probably she wished to conceal her identity.

But it seemed best to try to re-instate, if possible, the poor woman in her former home, hence we set about toward that end. In the process of weeks Mrs. Gilbrandt persuaded her to tell her name and one day I was able to locate her husband, who had been transferred in his work. I was compelled to report that after months of yearning and searching he grew discouraged and then disgusted, applied for a divorce and later married a woman who was a veritable mother to his children. I developed his confidence and at last learned that he had never heard of his former wife since she left him, but that the man had been seen in the city a number of times in a besotted condition. He also asserted that the mother of his children should never see them as she had forfeited that right. This last almost broke the woman's heart. But she was forced to confess the justice of this decree and to accept it uncomplainingly. She finally secured employment in another city. She left the city of her sin and her redemption without her family securing any knowledge of her but through an arrangement suggested by Mrs. Gilbrandt she did occasionally hear about her children. I wonder what heaven will be like when some folks reach that blissful land and see things as they are. Is it any wonder that when the woman came to realize how happy the home was which she had defrauded she resigned herself to her fate refusing to intrude upon their

joy but trusting to the revelations of eternity to bring about those fond reunions so dear to every real heart? Surely hers was a real love. And was not hers a genuine consolation also?

(Since writing the above we had a letter from Mrs. Gilbrandt informing us that the woman and her children had met at the bedside of her dying mother and that confession had been made and forgiveness given. Thus through the pall of the grave shone a resurrection hope. A resurrection of love between mother and children where joy eclipsed regret. It is passing hard to grasp but it is the way of the cross. The father then gave his consent for the children to visit their mother. But it must be admitted that occasional visits are not comparable to dwelling in the presence of those we love. But after all there is a yearning of heart which earth cannot satisfy. It would seem that sometimes even the redemption of a soul cannot remove all the tragedy of the trespass. But Christ can soothe the heart-ache. Still is it not true, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'It might have been.' ")

I do not find myself as successful in reaching women for Christian living as in reaching men. While I am relating incidents of the rescue of women it is because of the unusual nature of the reclamation or because of unusual circumstances attending the incident. As in every other rescue work men were sent on their way

rejoicing, while some women were not saved whom we tried to help.

But to continue my story. I said a bit ago that one night stands out in my memory. The mission was well filled with vagrants partially because the night was so unfriendly to the homeless. Men and women of almost every description and degree of wreckage were within our doors. The doorman had much to do to preserve a semblance of decorum among the talkative ones. Some of the inebriates soon fell into a drunken snore while others indulged in drunken jargon at unseasonable intervals. Women who had lost almost all sense of modesty and men utter strangers to the chivalrous added to the confusion.

One woman especially gabbled incoherently, which seemed to perplex me unaccountably. Imagine my astonishment when she burst out with:

“Dog-gone you, Billy, if I don’t believe you’ve more than half got religion.”

Where had I heard that expression? Who was this woman of the driftwood of society? As I later neared her seat she arose unsteadily and in maudlin fashion said, petulantly:

“Dog-gone you, Billy, if I don’t believe you’ve more’n half got religion.”

No one else took any account of her behavior for each was accustomed to hearing even stranger things than that, but as I looked at her bleared condition and her half-sane effort

to dress decently and as I watched her the intelligence dawned upon me that this was none other than Jennie, whom I had known in Seabend years before. But where was her partner in sin? What a train of associations wheeled through my mind, what a bevy of interogations buzzed in my consciousness.

But the service must be begun and our duty to these unfortunates attempted. During the singing she would join in without any conception of time or pitch. Sometimes the doorman would come and ask her to be quiet or leave. The service apparently impressed her and she tried to be attentive, but her response was insanely ludicrous. What was I to do? I refrained from going to her lest her drunken memory create a scene, yet my heart went out to her in pity. But I refrained from speaking to her. Mr. Gilbrandt went over to her as did his wife but they could not help her and the meeting closed without her reclamation.

Where was she stopping? Where would she sleep? I did not know nor could I learn. I shadowed her until I met a policeman and he said she belonged to the class who took care of themselves. I had suspected so. I asked him to take her to the lockup lest she have to sleep in the street, which he was good enough to do. The police let her go the next morning. I saw no more of her for several nights. They said the case was hopeless through abandonment of hope rather than weakness of will.

About ten days later she reappeared at the mission again, drunk but not so wild. I went to her and spoke to her before she had time to repeat her former jargon. She tried to say something but I intercepted the remark and she was sober enough to take the hint. Her singing was much as before and once or twice the doorman threatened to eject her. The service was deeply impressive and affected nearly all; but like the devil-possession man in the synagogue crying out honor to the Christ, so the drunken lunacy of human nature persisted in participating. It is insanity's method of showing appreciation for sanity, it is Bacchus adoring Christ.

As the meeting progressed Jennie grew calmer and more balanced while looking inquiringly and pleadingly at the one giving the message. Mrs. Gilbrandt went to her but her words were as if spoken in a foreign tongue. The benediction was pronounced and Jennie went out into the night. She could not grasp the message of hope, yet her soul was fighting for the dawn of spiritual intelligence. She returned a number of times. She appeared as one making progress only to lose the ground won. But she returned again and again as if attracted by the shelter. If she had any home we could not discover it. At last, urged by Mrs. Gilbrandt, she knelt at the altar much af-

fectured but utterly helpless. She tried to follow her counselors but apparently was unaware of the stupendous problems involved.

At last the depths of her soul were broken up. She shook with emotion while contrition was evidenced in her face. A vision of a new life appeared to her. A sense of her homelessness was borne in upon her and she sank under the discovery. She finally grew calmer under the mothering influences of Mrs. Gilbrandt and listened helplessly, famishingly to her words. She was tenderly led Christward until she was able to see Him beckoning her unto Him. She responded with her remaining strength to fall exhausted in His sustaining love, then began to weep in joy and peace. Poor soul, it was her first real knowledge of Christ and she received it through the mothering influence of Mrs. Gilbrandt. Then and there she experienced the power of mother love as well as of Divine love. She had grown up without the orchard wall, consequently the pruning and transplanting, while severe, was necessary. The Lord had accomplished the task through the faith of a saintly woman. God bless her kind.

When I have grown weary at my work or in my conflicts with temptation or against the injustices or the unholy influences, and have fled from the sight of the littleness of men and the war of selfishness and have almost doubted that there ever was a law governing the world,

I have recalled instances like these mentioned, then there would steal into my heart the assurance that God lives and moves in His world unimpaired in judgment, changeless in love, boundless in beneficence and good will to men. I know of nothing so uplifting to faith and so deadly to the blues as going into a slum mission to observe the omnipotence of God manifest in raising a wretch from the depths of degradation to the heights of a redeemed character. So many of us become corroded with the rust of spiritual idleness until it becomes infinitely painful to use the armor of the Lord so that when we are in danger the joints of the harness scarcely admit of freedom of movement while the armor itself is so easily punctured by the darts of the enemy. If we do not keep our armor burnished, it will rust away.

But a chain of queries speeded through my mind. How came Jennie here? Where was the man? Where could she go ultimately? What would her parents say were they still alive? They had so completely dropped out of my mind that seeing Jennie was as seeing one from the dead. I also thought of Jennie's previous indifference toward religion in contrast to her conversion. I began to wonder if after all there are not some who must needs go through a vast deal of terrible suffering or shame before they may come to see their utter need of God. Jennie redeemed from sin meant

more to the Kingdom than Jennie before her fall yet utterly indifferent to the influence of the Cross of Christ in human experience. "Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid." But the tragedy is that we are so blinded by the glitter of this life and the tendency to follow the lines of least resistance that it takes something drastic, terrible, blighting, to make us see the shallowness of our souls and the crying need for realities. Adam and Eve outside the garden apparently gave more serious consideration to the values of the Edenic life lost than they did in the garden to the Edenic life possessed. But it is contrary to God's plan.

But Jennie was cared for by new friends until she became stable enough to remain loyal to Christ. To give a soul salvation from sin is one thing but to provide him with stability in a world of sin may be quite another. Jennie was not neglected. There were noble women connected with the institution who mothered her to moral poise. But what about her parents? Could they appreciate the situation? We let the matter rest for the time being after I had told the mission officials what little I knew of her early life. It seemed best to keep her until she had lost much of the remains of sin before writing her parents of her whereabouts. It was likely, we felt, that they had accommodated themselves to her absence as best they

could and a short time longer could do them little hurt.

Finally they were notified. Jennie feared to write them, so Mrs. Gilbrandt did so. I can but imagine what effect the letter produced upon them as I never learned. But they finally wrote for her to come home. They had not been told how low their child had sunk, but they were told of her wonderful conversion. They made no reference to this information in their reply, nor did they write one word of appreciation for what anyone might have done for her. I venture no theory concerning their silence. Mrs. Gilbrandt wondered if it were an oversight and she grew a bit uneasy for Jennie at home as a result. It occurred to me that she set about with more care than ever, if possible, to strengthen the girl's faith and to prepare her for any eventuality. To this there was a happy response.

She went home in fear and trembling and yet with joy. Poor child, she had left the whole arrangements with Mrs. Gilbrandt and followed her directions like a dutiful child. She also kept her promise with her spiritual mother and wrote her tenderly of the home-going, telling in simple manner the attitude of her parents. It was pitiful to read between the lines, as we had to do. Her parents felt she had disgraced them in her elopement and that was all they knew of her misfortune for a long time, for Jennie carefully withheld telling

them more than they could comprehend. She gave them time to prepare for the spiritual miracle which followed the moral disgrace. They opened their doors for her, then closed them behind her, thus making a prison of their home not only for their daughter but also for themselves. The world could not look in. They would not look out and Jennie was forbidden to look out, although she was grateful for the seclusion.

But the grace of Christ manifest in a new-born soul could not always remain hidden and Jennie, under the careful tutelage by correspondence of Mrs. Gilbrandt, revealed little by little the nature of the Christian faith she possessed. This was a constant surprise, mortification, and joy to her parents, who had no idea why people made so much of Christian experience. How much of it they were able to absorb, I never learned. Little by little Jennie's new life radiated through the gloomy recesses of that isolated home and little by little its beams shone through the artificial walls of protection and fell upon the wondering eyes of curious neighbors with a vernal fragrance that was quickening until people saw the girl had far better sense than formerly and that she was gradually proving a benediction to others.

"Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid." But it is true nevertheless that there are some of us who are of no value to God and society until we become broken as well as

empty vessels for the Master's use made meet. I learned a few months ago that Jennie had married an honest and industrious man to whom she insisted on telling her story before she would consent to marry him. He replied that it was not her past which attracted him but her present life and what he believed her future to be. She had had her life storm because no one was wise enough to forestall it and she had been left demolished beyond recognition. The Divine had found the wreck and remade a character. This is the only lasting sort of reconstruction of character with which I am familiar. This is a saying hard to be understood. The Pharisee and publican stood on contiguous corners of Jerusalem at prayer. The publican made progress, the pharisee lost ground.

But what of Bilkins? What do you suppose, O reader? What could the impulsive girl promise herself? If he could violate his marriage vow made before God what would he not do regarding the girl who clandestinely left with him contrary to conscience and morality? No matter though she might imagine she had met her affinity, honesty of feeling would not save her from the grip of sin and its fruitage. How could she guarantee that he might not find another who was more of an affinity to him than was she? If he had misguessed about his own wife being his affinity, might he not have misguessed regarding her? Anyway he,

having grown weary of her after leading her through devious ways, abandoned her to her fate for newer gratifications of lust.

How easy it is under the glitter of false lights to fancy that a new social order is springing up which must annul all the immemorial principles of life! Is it not surprising that an individual like Bilkins can readily find his affinity any time he wants her? Jennie had learned her lesson but it was no warning to the next dupe who would spurn her with her foot while planning to elope with the man who had ruined Jennie. No matter how many mortgages the devil forecloses, he is always able without delay to get any number of "innocents abroad" to sign the same sort of document. The uninitiated are too blind to learn from those who have suffered. They are so utterly ignorant of the intricacies of sin that they think themselves wise. Fools rush in and come out failures. But there is never a dearth of those willing to try. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Jennie had learned her lesson and been healed of her injuries but the scar remained in her soul many, many days even though she had been saved unto the uttermost. Is it true or not that "the bird with the broken pinion never soared so high again?" Boasting of our superior powers will do very well when we are

out of reach of temptation, but those of us who have fallen may well shudder at the untried feet near slippery places. The man Bilkins had won another affinity and flown to parts unknown. Poor thing, would she be so fortunate some day to find some Mrs. Gilbrandt who could reveal to her the healing of the seamless dress of Jesus? Or would she meet the logical results of her folly and become an incurable victim of violation of the unbending laws of character? More than one jubilant heart has sailed forth under gay but false colors only to later become a derelict wreck to lie unsalvaged upon the shoals of time. No gratitude is too extreme growing out of the consciousness of one's reclamation when one must recall that many, many never are salvaged, but rot piece by piece outside the harbor in the grave lanes of forgotten hopes.

It is needless to write that Jennie's conversion affected me more deeply than most which I witnessed. I watched her development with great but unobtrusive concern. I spoke nothing to anyone of my feelings, but many things came to my mind. I was tempted to fear that indirectly at least I had had something to do with her elopement. This state of mind grew on me until I fell on my knees alone and besought God for intelligence regarding the matter. I could find no condemnation in prayer, but some Voice spoke to me telling me that I was not a Christian in those days and that all

my past had gone under the blood. That night I saw in a dream unusual things and heard voices speaking across distances. I heard the cry of a woman in distress. I found myself groping in the darkness to rescue her. I saw the Christ rise out of the mist before me beckoning. I followed, only to be left alone but in the twilight. Waiting undecided, I heard the voice of a woman in song. I could hear the words:

“I will follow where He leadeth: I will pasture where he feedeth. I will follow all the way, Lord; I will follow Jesus every day.”

Before the song died away a woman stood near at hand from whose lips the song came. I awoke to find myself sitting upright in bed gazing into space with my heart radiant. The next day I recalled the dream of the night and could not shake off its influence. Indeed, I found it next to impossible to want to shake it off. But where had I seen the face and heard the voice of the dream? I recurrently found myself trying to figure that. At last it dawned upon me what I had seen and heard on the train westward many months before.

CHAPTER IX.

Called to Minister.

I had kept up a more or less regular correspondence with Father Henderson. I could not forget him and he would not forget me. He was certainly my father in Christ. Jim and Clara had not forgotten him either. Neither had they forgotten me. I had received so many invitations to visit them while in the West but had never gone. At last I must needs go for two reasons. I was soon to leave for more distant points and then I was duty bound to see Henderson McMasters O'Brien. That name was Jim's way of showing his love for the two of us. Burdening the little innocent with such a name! But have his way he did. Clara objected on the ground that the name was unwieldly but she finally giggled and resigned herself to the child's fate. Strange to say, the child really lived and became a hearty youngster.

I found Jim and Clara happy as two spring lovers. They had not forgotten their courtship nor their honeymoon together and had welded their lives with the delicate tenderness of Cupid and the rugged strength of Vulcan. They were one and the little son became the Colossus of their hearts. Their home life was lacking in ostentation. They would always be Jim and Clara. Refined by the presence of Christ and their chaste love for each other,

their home was a retreat for any heart. To me it was a portion of Eden for I had been denied the joys of home life and had seen so much wrong in homes and had heard so many domestic infelicities aired in the courts that it was growing difficult to picture home as it should be. I needed such a visit to put me in the right frame of mind for the service I was being called upon to render.

Father Henderson had written me that a new mission was to be opened in the East and that he had recommended me for the office of superintendent. He was instructed to extend to me the offer. He urged me to accept it if I could conscientiously do so. After prayerful consideration I accepted the position. Enroute East I visited my parents, who were overjoyed regarding my new position. They looked aged. Much of the elasticity had gone from their steps but not from their hearts. I fancied I saw them growing younger as they questioned me about my work, past and future. They spoke of the riches of age until I could almost hear Rabbi Ben Ezra saying:

“Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be—
The last of life for which the first was made.
Our times are in His hand
Who sayeth: A whole I planned:
Youth shows but half. Trust God, see all,
nor be afraid.”

Surely that is Christianity whether seen by the Rabbi in part or the Christian poet in whole. Mother kept singing the same old song she did when I was a lad—the song of all songs I first remember:

“O Beulah land, sweet Beulah land,
As on the highest mount I stand,
I look away across the sea
Where mansions are prepared for me,
And view the shining, glory shore,
My heaven, my home forever more.”

They were loathe to have me go. But exacting a promise that I would visit them no less than once a year, and knowing on what mission I went, they the more readily consented to my leaving. Mother tried to exact a promise that I would marry but in this she was disappointed. She felt sure there was some one who would enrich my life, but I could not encourage her in her request. I had forgotten that marriage might ever be my privilege.

The cities of the East had grown to be home to me. Seabend held a spell over my life I can never express. As I entered the East a host of recollections trooped through my mind. Pleasant voices called out of the past but there were tear-dimmed features also. Jim and Clara were gone. Seabend seemed to welcome my return but many vacant places haunted me. I made my way to my last rooming place. The

lady answered my rap, then stood looking at me for a moment, only to exclaim:

“Well, if it isn’t Billy McMasters. Come right in. What brought you here?” It seemed good to be there but haunting vacancies were sensed. Her husband came home and after supper we tramped up and down the boulevard where I again drank in the atmosphere of the sea. I was famished for it.

My meeting with Father Henderson was all that could have been expected. Year by year he was a bit more stooped, a little less alert. But he seemed as young as ever. He never could grow old in heart. He gave me most valuable counsel regarding my new duties and I was soon settled in the mission work as superintendent. Someone loaned us a room for our beginning, which was on a modest scale. Friends grew interested in the venture and we have never lacked for any help we have needed. We saw that faith must be practiced were we to succeed and we have believed for what we needed. We have felt that no holier work was ever undertaken than that of raising the fallen and giving beauty for ashes, and the Lord has honored our work. We have prayed that the day may dawn when no longer will there be need for slum missionary work. We would gladly give up our chosen occupation could we but see that day’s arrival. Could not society create such a spiritual atmosphere, such social and economic conditions which

would forever make the slums impossible? Why could not some moral Utopia become actualized upon earth, thus obliterating all crime, all poverty, all loathsomeness? Can't some warning power be manifest to turn back the ever-flowing current of humanity to lower levels? The downward flow of the discouraged, despairing, tempted, and trapped of earth's myriads finds its last flood-level in the slums before it sweeps on out into the eternities, the dread unknown of the unsalvaged. But until that Utopia transpires life-boats must be manned to breast the raging billows to rescue such as are near enough the surface to be seized. "Rescue the perishing, duty demands it."

One evening, after I had been in the mission for some time, a group of men and women came into the mission who were not of the slums. Some were dressed in garb of consecration but of what sect I did not know. I learned afterwards that some of them were giving their entire time to rescue work, while others just as devout could not do that yet were ever ready to lend holy assistance to the Lord. We gave the service into their hands. One of the women wearing the garb of consecration arose to sing. I was impressed with some attitude or atmosphere of recognition but I did not know who

she was. She sang sweetly, understandingly, and with skill:

“He drew me out of the miry clay,
He set my feet on the rock to stay,
He puts a song in my soul today—
A song of praise, halleluiah.”

On the invitation's being given a score of persons bowed at the altar and most of them professed conversion. As usual, their names were taken and their address, if they had any, and they were visited next day. The visitors mingled among the folk of the mission as to the manner born. I presently spoke to them and the singer, with more liberty than the rest, inquired:

“Is not this William McMasters?”

“It is,” I replied.

“And don't you remember me?”

“No, I do not,” I answered.

“Have you forgotten the heart-sick soul whom Mrs. Blue of Seabend so kindly received into her home in Parkway so many years ago when no one else had any room for her?”

I was nonplussed for a moment. So many things had come into my life since that time that it took me several moments to recall the incident, but at last I replied:

“Yes, I remember you. You're Mrs. Blaire, aren't you?”

“I am.”

“I didn't recognize you at all, but the years bring such changing experiences to each of us

that after while some of these experiences are forgotten until recalled through some present association."

"I have tried to forget some things past," she replied half sadly.

"It is the only way to live wisely, I believe," I said. "I feel it is possible to so change that things which should be forgotten may lose their appalling influence even out of one's memory."

"Yes," she replied happily, "By the grace of God."

"By the grace of God," I repeated, deeply moved. Then I continued, "We are your debtors tonight. You have inspired our hearts with your song, and we can never forget you. If your faith and your Christian experience are equal to the inspiration you have produced in our hearts, you are indeed rich."

"Mrs. Blaire is far better than her service," spoke one of the elderly women who had not essayed to speak before.

"What we are is infinitely more than what we can do," I ventured.

Perhaps this will prove a most uninteresting narrative to most readers. It is not being written as a substitute for some passing pleasure. My heart has ached more than once as I have recorded facts and feelings of my life. Visions recurring to me of other days, of neglected energies and wasted hours, of ties

formed then severed, have flitted across memory, or forms once dear silently passed across the sear sod of recollection only to vanish in dim distances, leaving my heart rent anew crying for dear ones who were once delightful to know.

“But, oh, for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still,” was wrung from a writhing heart.

The romance and sentiments of youth give place to the sterner thoughts of life. The voice of duty and of labor ring out over the fields of experience and arouse the soul from its dream of beauty to the rugged perspective of things as they are. Blessed is he whose day of romance has not set in an eclipse. Blessed is he who can translate the enthusiasm of youth into the sterner duties of manhood. But pity him who must take up the heavy tasks of maturity with but juiceless, heartless will. Pity the man whose countenance is always grim, who never has a smile to lighten his features. I have sometimes wondered if even God could restore to the heart the joys, normal and elevating, that have been wrenched from it by tragedy. But the kingdom of God is a kingdom of joy. It is neither lo, here, nor lo, there, but within one. But it is not easy to find that kingdom if the power to be joyful has been beaten and mangled by the circumstances of life. Blessed be he who can find his romance reborn in the Lamb's wooing, he shall live and

love anew and be loved. This is a part of the resurrection.

So, losing myself in the work of a slum missionary, I began to find myself young again, loving the souls in the name of the Lord Jesus. It has been worthwhile. Beda, wherever she might be, had gone out of my life and left a vacancy. But the Christ unobtrusively but none the less dynamically had poured Himself into my empty life and I was reliving, and my sympathies were growing. I was loving the world of the lost as I had never dreamed it possible. I was rejoicing beyond words. I was walking again and again in heavenly places. It is true that nothing of earth can fill the breach when a loved one is gone and sometimes it becomes a strain upon the soul to believe even the Divine. Such loss is not to be treated lightly nor cynically. It is too tragic. I have been dangerously near the brink myself and know something of the appalling tingling of soul as I have stared into the abyss. It is then that God is needed and, strange to say, it is then that God sometimes appears the farthest removed and the most inconsiderate. I trow it is a sin not to be hastily condemned if the soul almost accuses God of lack of sympathy. Some valleys of sorrow are so very deep, so very long, so very dark, while the sun-kissed summits of Divine promise are so very high, so inaccessible. A sublime faith will save such a life, but any less faith will fail one. O God,

be near us when we must pass through the valleys on the way to the City Beautiful.

“Be near me when the light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow.

“Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.”

There are times when God must speak to the soul in terms of personality rather than in terms of precept or parable. There is nothing which can take the place of the personal touch. One live saint is worth ten lifeless creeds. One Nazarine eclipses ten commandments.

“Blessed Savior, walk with me,
Take away all anguish fear;
Ever stay so close beside me
I may know and feel Thee near.”

It would be impossible to enumerate the list of disappointed who came to me personally or into the mission seeking employment, sustenance, or salvation. Men and women wrecked in health, happiness, hope—one or all—gravitating to lower levels socially, morally, poured or wept their stories into my experienced ears. How many there are from the farms or rural towns who turn to the cities seeking employment or a career to find themselves stranded, friendless, shelterless, inexperienced, too

proud to confess to friends back home that they have failed, eking out a mere existence for body but dying to every other thought. It is always a sad story and no man with a heart of pity can ever acquire a merely professional attitude toward such conditions. One can always hold out the offer of mercy which culminates in the hope of heaven but to be able to reinstate the failure in life in the pristine glory of unsullied character or unbroken ambition is a harder task. This truth is tragedy in that it is a shame that our present civilization is too immature to provide for all the needs of life's frailties and failures. But it is likewise true that God is always prepared to receive and enrich the moral and spiritual wrecks and paupers who strew the hedgerows of blighted life. God pity us all that our faith and provision have not been equal to the need nor identical with the Divine compassion. Then, too, God pity us all that so few of us have the wisdom to choose the upper levels and walk thereon day by day in spite of everything. We follow too often the trail of least resistance and arrive nowhere. Eden was not a city, and if the Bible be true the first city was built by a murderer and the curse of Cain has not as yet been removed from the brow of his institution. This is one of the mysteries of history.

I have seen scores of men and women felled by the sons of Cain, and some of them were among the choicest sons of Abel. "Am I my

brother's keeper?" many today are saying, with positive denial in their attitude while at the same time strangling hope, heart, happiness. What will be the verdict of accusative justice when the books are opened and the deeds of the sons of Cain are read?

I have often asked myself if it is not tragedy that the comfort of God is dependent upon the man's faith, whereas the man is so torn and bruised that he has all too little strength to exercise the faith that heals and restores. How can a man live without being loved if he has given his whole life of love to one he would have wed if he could? To the cynic this will appear imbecilic, to the stern as ludicrous, but to the normal mind who has loved, who knows the meaning of normal dreams, it will prove a question worthy of consideration and one difficult to answer. "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," does not contain much comfort for the soul in like predicament unless it indeed be true that misery loves company.

But on closer study he is led to see that even though the Son of Man was so poor, so lonely, which sometimes is infinitely worse, he did succeed, and, what is sometimes infinitely better, he was always optimistic and contented. What was His secret? It is worth while to in-

investigate. To love and to unlove are easy matters as some find them, but the love of a mature life who has lived in a rich idealism for some time is far less easy to forget. Not very many divorces develop from love like that. Money, much or little, is not a satisfactory heart-balm for a love like that. It may be a just penalty for the offender but contains no healing qualities.

But in Christ is much comfort and I found the secret. So many came into the mission whose wounds were deep, so much deeper than mine, and so many of the wounds were infected with moral taint. So many of the instruments which wound are septic and the symptoms become apparent in the faces of the wounded.

“The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain.
We touch Him in life’s throng and press
And we are whole again.”

But suppose He has not been on some of the crowded streets where contagion does its deadliest work, how can they touch his robes and how can they become whole who are afflicted? We who know Him must pattern our robes after His and walk those streets in holy self-sacrifice. There are so many rude shocks to our native sensibilities in these congested situations. Let us not go there at all unless we have on a seamless robe. It is better

that life's unfortunates hide their shame and sorrow among their kind then in the grave unless we have the power to save them and purify their environment. The curiosity of the idle and unconsecrated is a sin and betrays a hidden element of the slum-soul in their own moral natures. Mental indecency may be less crude than physical indecency but it is scarcely less obnoxious to God Almighty. There are sins other than bodily which damn men. The unfortunates are wise to the motives of those who are among them investigating their lot. They may be failures but they are not all fools.

Then, too, not all who are in the slums are a part of the slums. Some are herded there through poverty who would be otherwheres if they could afford to go. Utterly hopeless they exist where they can, having their souls tormented by the sin and degradation of their environment, glad when they can leave the earth-world for lands where none but the pure in heart dwell. Can one wonder at their intense and constant longing for release? Men and women from good homes pushed by misfortune into the slum districts who will not be pushed into the cess-pools about them. Oh, the lost dreams of earth, where are they? But the danger lies in the possibility that the children of these unfortunate good people may not be able to withstand the withering blight of their

environment. This is the damning consciousness constantly staring the parent out of countenance.

Not all in the slums are of the slums but there is always grave danger that they may become of them. Living next door to damnation has a deleterious effect. Lot and his family could not withstand the damaging influences of Sodom. Three of them escaped with their lives but not with their souls. The downward pull of an evil environment cannot be understood by one who has never felt the power of its undertow. "The poor ye have with you always," but society could reduce the number of moral lepers would they but obliterate the sink-holes of sin. This will be done when the Holy City New Jerusalem is fully come from God to dwell with men.

Oh, the confessions which lie buried in the utter forgetfulness of God. I have no confessional save the one where I go to confess to God my own faults which are many, very many. I stand condemned in my own soul so often for my own mistakes and all too often valuable time is taken confessing to Heaven my faults which should have been devoted for the promotion of His kingdom had I been without fault. I try to get comfort by sometimes wondering if St. Paul himself did not feel so regarding his own heart. I am informed that he prayed no less than three times to be rid of some handicap. How long he prayed we do not

know but he must have agonized over it each time. I know also that he was greatly concerned lest when he had preached to others he himself should be cast off. I have a suspicion that close self-examination is fundamental to perfection. Yet I would not try to excuse my own lack of hero-character. I have felt that at rare intervals I have had my transfiguration scenes but the valley experience with the devil-possessed has more often been my lot. Have I always had faith enough to cast the devil out? I fear I have been up in the mount too seldom for such a list of victories. But it has become my lot to hear the lamentation of souls that will be heard. There are sobs which wring the heart. There are lives with pathos written in their records. There are tragedies which speak louder than thunder yet whose faintest whisper finds audience with the listening Deity. Oh, the cry of the soul in the ditch! Oh, the moan of the lips which have sipped the poison from the chalice of devils! "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" because thousands are rotting in soul torment. Today the world is crying one to another, "Could you not watch with me an hour?"

When a man or woman is found who can be touched with a feeling for the infirmities of earth then the woes of broken men and women are poured into the ear without cessation. Thank God, there is a Saviour, a Balm in Gilead, for all who need healing! But not

everyone knows that, and some who know have not faith. What must be the content of a Christless eternity?

Then, too, the law of retribution is a terrible rule. "Chickens come home to roost." "The mills of God grind slowly though they grind exceeding small," and there is intelligence behind them. We have to deal with God. We are in God's world even though the devil is making an immense hullabaloo about ownership. Sooner or later we arrive at the end of life to discover the beginning. Our "swing around the circle" becomes finished. We can never entirely break the pull of the initial Influence. We must return to the Master's house to give account of our stewardship. We may dance away under the spell of the rhythm of enchanting music utterly bewildered by the encircling arms of adventure but before the fiddler has ended his strain we are back at the beginning and compelled to pay for the dance. Sooner or later the idle are ordered to report for duty. Sooner or later the sower goes home to his Master. Sooner or later the threshing-floor will tell its bushels. Sooner or later—

CHAPTER X.

Empty-handed.

One evening the assistant handed me a note given him at the door. Not having time to read it then, I opened it in my room later to read:

“Come to No. — on — Street tomorrow at 3:00 P. M. I am in trouble and if you cannot help me I am doomed.”

The note was to me very mystifying. There was no name signed, no clue given as to the writer's identity. I knew that it might be a ruse, yet what could be planned against me? I knew of having no enemies. I laid the letter before the Lord in prayer and He directed me to accede to the request, that He had prepared the way. I thought of Peter's mission to Cornelius and thus gained confidence. I had a sort of premonition that the meeting with the sender of the note would be momentous and prayed God to take me into His keeping and He assured me He would. I then fell asleep and into a dream of drowning men and women and cries for help and hurrying feet and snorting motors, a plunge into deep water, then an escape.

At the hour appointed I appeared at the given address, where I was met by a woman who wore both dignity and sorrow, but it was not the sorrow which is lighted by a smile. It was the sorrow of despair. Her expressive eyes were underlined with dark circles and her

cheeks looked gaunt, while her natural bearing was one of defeat slowly and bitterly yielded to. She wore an out-of-date costume which had seen too constant service.

I handed her the note, which she at once recognized, then bade me enter. Going through a narrow, dark hall, she pushed ajar a door and indicated a chair in the room adjoining. This I occupied the while my eyes took in a hasty but experienced glance at my surroundings. A man's photograph stood on a narrow mantelpiece revealing a face which betrayed schooling, self-poise, and good nature. Beside it another photograph, in which was depicted educational development, but self-will and mastery of others. I at once saw the second photograph was that of my hostess, but what a change! Against the wall hung two framed diplomas: one from a college and the other from a medical school. I could not make out the name in either but they appeared to be identical.

The lady seated herself and appeared to be gazing into space, but she rallied and inquired:

"You are in charge of the mission?"

I told her that I was.

"I have never taken any interest in such things, but I have heard of your work, even in this section of the city," she said, in a tone not easily understood.

“It is a work which needs doing and the Lord appears to want me to be there,” I replied, not knowing how to answer her.

She did not seem to hear me but began:

“I have not asked your name nor indicated that I know it, because courtesy would require that I tell you mine, which you need not know and, I trust, you will make no inquiry about it.”

“I shall comply with your desire, madam,” I replied.

“I am in great distress,” she began presently. “It seemed that I had to tell someone and somehow I felt drawn to you. I have no church affiliations. I have never cared much for that, although at one time my husband did.”

A tear stole into her eyes and a quiver took possession of her lip, but with practiced self-mastery she regained her self-possession, then proceeded:

“He has been dead two years. I have lived here alone almost ever since. I moved here six weeks after he died. He left me very little and I tutor young women from the college here. We were very happy once but I ruined him. He was called to preach, if ever a man was, then later we met and he loved me but I wouldn’t marry a minister. Love and duty fought a battle in him and love won. It was a pure love he had for me, but I don’t think it could have been a holy love. (Her discrimination startled me. I had never heard it before. A pure love

but not a holy love. A pure love but not a holy love! What could she mean? But I was beginning to lose the thread of her discourse, so laid aside for the time being the mental discussion.) I wanted him to be a physician because that would not drag me into public responsibility. I loved society in a way the church condemned, and there was more remuneration in medicine than in preaching. I had my way. I have learned that 'the mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding small,' for they have ground me. It seemed to me that God was cruel and I came as near to cursing Him as a woman dare. But of late I seem to hear a voice saying to me, 'Woman, you would not have been ground had you not put yourself between the upper and nether millstones and persisted in remaining there.'

(Again I was startled by the statement and the marvelous conviction elicited in spite of her poise.)

"But I am getting ahead of my story. My husband who was to be gave up all thought of the ministry after he was succeeding as a student pastor, but with great reluctance. He was never the same after that. He studied medicine and made excellent grades but the faculty of the school of medicine said he was too mechanical, that he put no soul into his work. And he never did into his practice, although it became large and he was successful. I often chided him for his change in mood and

he would take me in his arms and kiss me but he would say nothing. I sometimes grew angry with his moodiness, then he would turn to me with aggrieved expression but in silence, hence I grew to fear to mention his moods to him for the effect upon him haunted me. He was always affectionate but his light-heartedness was gone.

Once he was unusually moody when he had a very serious case and some friend suggested he take a little light wine, which he did abstractedly. But it gave birth in him to the demon of drink and he went down hill at lightning speed. Nothing could stop him. In my desperation I suggested religion but he looked at me with the expression of a soul haunted with a vision of the lost world, so that I dared not mention it again. He took no care of himself, so developed hasty tuberculosis, and the two killed him. The last night he lived he lay in a stupor for hours. Then presently he opened his eyes, like one in another world, and began to read the story of the Prodigal Son. We couldn't stop him. He was a man with great originality and he pictured the swine-life of sin as I had never seen. He had grown up on the farm and was preaching a sermon on the Prodigal Son. He had the young man seated under the husk-tree in the midst of the herd with all the moral filth the scene suggests,

when with a last look as upon an imaginary audience and a wild swing of both arms, he fell back in the nurse's arms dead."

I was amazed at the composure of the woman as she related the incident. True, her face became ghastly pale, but it had also become set and parched. I was trembling from head to heel. I had seen life before but I became so harrowed that I lost consciousness of the fact that I was there to help her. I felt I needed assistance. I was dumb. Presently she continued:

"My life since then has been a hell on earth. I hated God, though why, I can't say. I quit all social life before my husband died. I have never been out to any social function since his death although my friends insist that I go. I have had words of sympathy from those who pitied my lot with such a man but none was aware that I made him what he became. I was at cross-purposes with Infinity. I won out but it was a temporary victory. Such things always seem to end in ultimate defeat."

I said nothing. I could not intrude. I had regained my wonted self-possession and felt that God only could answer her. Presently she fell to musing but the lines were dry and hard in her face,

"Once I came near drowning. He was a student pastor and I was visiting him. We were out in a boat and I lost my head and we upset. I am told that had not two men rushed to our

assistance we would have drowned. I used to want to meet them to thank them for their heroism, but, since things ended as they have, I have often felt that if I could find them I would curse them with a crushed woman's eternal curse."

I was so startled with this narrative and with her expression of her feelings that I gasped for breath but she was too buried in her own glow to see my predicament. Finally I stammered:

"My good woman, what can I do to relieve your heart?"

"Nothing," she said with emphasis bordering upon finality. "Nothing can be done. I sent for you because I felt that if I could not tell someone, I must go insane and do myself injury, and I don't know but that it would be the better thing to do."

"My good woman," I hastened, "let that idea be farthest from your thoughts."

"It would be but a fitting conclusion to a foolish life," she returned, with harsh decision. "You may go now," she added not unkindly. "It was good of you to come, but there is nothing anyone can do. There is no hope."

There was no place for discussion, no place for protest, no place for expressed pity; no word of sympathy seemed adequate. I arose and she followed me to the door, where she put out her hand in abstracted courtesy. I took it with a feeling of dread uncertainty, when with

complete spontaneity and heart-breaking impulse I almost cried,

“‘Truly He had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed’.”

She almost closed the door upon me, leaving me dazed upon the stoop.

My mind and heart were all in a whirl but I arrived nowhere in my confusion, as I practically ran the greater part of the way back to the section of the city familiar to me. I had forgotten to take a car. I was really exhausted when I reached my room and I could go to no other task. That night I did not sleep. I tried to pray and while there was personal peace, nevertheless I got nowhere in my communion. I had fitful dreams what little time during the night I was not awake. The woman's face and form and her story were intermingled with visions of a man preaching about the Prodigal Son, coupled with memories of Jennie, interspersed with cries for help, a boathouse, a gasoline launch, a hurrying to the rescue, a cold plunge, then a tugging at a woman's arm, then I would awake with a start to find myself sitting bolt upright in bed. Thus the night was spent. The next morning I arose weary but with a clear mind and things began to arrange themselves in some historical order and to set me wondering if this were the climax or conclusion of experiences I had had in Seabend

years before. Was her husband the man I had heard preach that momentuous evening? Was this the couple Jim and I had rescued from the lake? I recalled having heard he was to be a physician. Oh, yes, that old "town crier" we met on the streets of Interlaken had told us that. Could this be they? But one thing was sure. The woman herself knew nothing concerning my connection with her rescue from the lake.

But I wondered if she would ever send for me again. That was scarcely probable. She had delivered her mind of its load and would probably never refer to it again.

None of us lives to himself. Sooner or later we must have a confidante or lose our normality of mind. This woman had kept her story to herself for two years and had been forced to speak under penalty of insanity. But why had she told me rather than some friend or some minister nearer her home? I reasoned that she was too proud to let people of her own social stratum know the causes back of her social decline. She had learned of our mission and reasoned that she, like others, could confide in me. I could think of no other plausible reason.

But would I never hear of her again? What would be her fate? I was so burdened in her behalf. After wrestling in prayer with her need upon my lips the Lord lifted the burden by telling me the burden was His alone and no

longer mine, and I was content. He had answered my prayer. I awaited His time of showing me what he would have me do.

Some weeks later she came into the mission unattended. She was in severe contrast to her environment. True, her costume was not up-to-date, but it was a reminder of better days, while she was stiffly dignified and harsh in outline. I spoke to her at the close of service but she gave me no look of recognition although she was courteous. I read her wish and passed with the mere formality of speaking. She returned within a few weeks with no change of deportment. She came more frequently until we grew to expect her once per week. No softening of her attitude was noticeable. She froze all attempts of approach on the part of any well-meaning servant of the Lord. While I made no effort to engage her in conversation, still I did not interfere with another's attempt to do so. Every one had a question-mark concerning her. Even the habitual drunks present looked upon her with concern and maudlin respect bordering upon superstition. They sometimes ventured a drunken remark of honor concerning her but her ears were sealed and her face rigidly cast. I was asked again and again who she might be but I never had a satisfactory reply. I again held my peace, knowing that God would reveal His will when He saw it meet. I did not know what course

He would take. I was neither burdened nor curious, hence did not worry. I felt it was a victory to have her come to the mission, that it was the beginning of something notable and I could pray and trust and wait.

She had been coming for several months more or less regularly, with no visible results, until she became a sort of fixture and our workers were treating it as a matter of course and never anticipating any change in her course of conduct. This could not be said as lack of faith on their part, for they knew nothing concerning her past. She was always unapproachable. She never denied, affirmed, confessed, nor professed anything to anyone about the mission at any time. I could see that at times her inner suffering was terrible but her composure was superb. Sometimes she appeared to be suffering forty deaths. The mission workers sensed this and made attempts to approach her but retired in disorder. I felt she was fighting between a surrender to the Spirit and the memory of her past wrong which was supported by her pride. I thought that her step grew less steady and her form less plump and her dignity less secure but the harshness was none the less severe and repelling. She was suffering hell, yet like Satan, she appeared to be saying:

“What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome?
That glory never shall His Wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and diety His power
Who, from the terror of His arm, so late
Doubted His empire—that were low indeed.”

One evening three people, not of the slums, came into our midst. They were striking in appearance. I was prone to say to myself,

“There come Abraham and Sarah, and possibly Rachel.” “Rachel,” or whoever she might be, found seats for the others, then turned toward me and I recognized her as Mrs. Blaire. She greeted me with courtesy, then introduced me to her friends. They looked at me with recognition as soon as I approached but not until their names were spoken did I know them to be Mr. and Mrs. Blue, of Parkway, Seabend. But what changes the years had wrought. It suddenly dawned upon me that I, too, had changed; that the years had left their impress upon my life, so gradually, so imperceptibly to me, but none the less truly. Then I had forgotten Mr. and Mrs. Blue save once when Mrs. Blaire had been in the mission, but that had been months before. Age had ripened or perfected their wisdom and their love. A quick retrospect led me to feel that the ones I knew in the years past were slipping out of memory and perhaps some had gone to that bourne from which no traveler returns.

Mr. and Mrs. Blue brought me greetings from Father Henderson. But he was ever a present influence in my life. I saw him frequently. He was too indispensable to me to be forgotten. I have often felt that I shall want to see him among the very first when I shall have set foot upon the golden sands of life immortal. Mrs. Blaire stood watching Mr. and Mrs. Blue as they spoke to me of events of other days. I could see the love and interest of this elderly couple for the woman they had befriended. I felt myself transported to past years. I recalled the occasion when they had announced to Father Henderson and myself that they would shelter this lonely woman in despair. I recalled another occasion when Mrs. Blaire and I discovered our kinship in hopelessness and in Divine mercy. The environment of the mission was lost out of my consciousness for the time being and nothing but the past and none but these three were present. The past began to slip away and I found myself standing among these three lost in reverie. From one to another my eyes moved and when they rested upon Mrs. Blaire's face I discovered that she, too, had lost the sense of things present. Our eyes met and one said to the other in unspoken language:

“We have been of kin through all the years. We have been apart but alike. We are in the same world. There is no helping it. It must

be so. To change this fact is to change ourselves."

I felt her personality gripping me with uncountable, invisible hands. I could see that she was experiencing the same influences as from me. It was all in a flash, in an instant of time, but we stood transfixed. Some one announced the opening hymn of the service which called us to things present. Mrs. Blaire looked bewildered. I turned with some confusion away and took my place upon the platform. The assistant finally asked Mr. Blue if he would read a Scripture lesson and comment upon it. This he did with practical and tender wisdom. He himself had never been vile nor low but he was a man capable of sensing the wretchedness of lost souls and the misery of the disheartened. The service was simple but profound. At the conclusion of his remarks Mrs. Blaire sang in a rich, sweet voice the Gospel story in the words of James M. Gray:

"Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
No riches of earth could have saved my poor soul;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Saviour now maketh me whole.
I am redeemed, but not with silver;
I am bought, but not with gold;
Bought with the price—the blood of Jesus,
Precious price of love untold."

The Lord was in the singing and in the song. Even the drunk men grew quiet and several degrees more sober. The atmosphere became

holy. Nothing but the singer moved by the Spirit was speaking audibly, but God was whispering to hearts. Coming as it did after Mr. Blue's remarks, it made a fitting climax which was breaking down the old walls of sin.

The second stanza began:

“Nor silver nor gold hath obtained by redemption,
The guilt on my conscience too heavy had grown;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Saviour could only atone.”

When Mrs. Blaire began her song she was looking up, but as she was singing the second stanza her eyes seemed drawn to something in the audience and, cautiously following her gaze, I saw they were fixed upon the lady in mourning who was looking down with immobile features cast in suffering. The stanza and chorus were finished and Mrs. Blaire continued:

“Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
The holy commandment forbade me draw near;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Saviour removeth all fear.”

Before the stanza was finished the woman had looked up at the singer. It was the first time she had done so in any service. She never observed the speaker before. This time she appeared to experience a drawing power from the singer and was caught off guard so that when their eyes met she had to leave them there.

During the fourth stanza the women began to sway back and forth from one toward the other. I grew intensely interested but tried to conceal the state of mind lest the listener see and the battle be lost. But I never saw such intensity of feeling manifest. The singer was singing—would it be a swan song or a pean of victory?

“Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
The way into heaven could not thus be bought;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The blood of my Saviour redemption hath wrought.”

The stanza was finished with a burst of feeling that was near to a shout. The chorus was not attempted. Mrs. Blaire left the platform and went to the woman, though they were utter strangers, while everyone present was awed into deepest reverence. Putting her arms about the woman's shoulders she almost lifted her to her feet yet did it so imperceptibly that no resistance was offered. The woman was as a lifeless thing, scarcely being able to stand alone. She was almost carried to the altar—her face and hands looking like marble. She sank upon her knees staring into vacancy. No tears, no expression, save the expression of death. For was she not dying to the past? Mrs. Blaire remained beside her. An altar service followed such as I have never seen again. Hearts were wrung in prayer but no audible

word was spoken. Scarcely more than a smothered sob from some woman wrestling in prayer. Statue-like the woman remained. Was she praying or dying? "I am crucified with Christ." It takes that before Christ can be born in us.

Finally Mrs. Blue began, in her quaint yet Spirit-filled manner, to sing:

"I can, I will, I do believe;
I can, I will, I do believe;
I can, I will, I do believe,
That Jesus saves me now."

A few moments then elapsed when the harshness of outline, the rigidity of form, the marble-like expression, the unutterable suffering left the seeker. Her hands relaxed their death-like grip on each other, her face became at peace with itself, her heart fell into a slumber of trust, she looked up toward God and said,

"I am redeemed."

She became transfixed with rapture for a brief moment, then waving aloft both arms with a wild joy, she threw herself back upon Mrs. Blaire's breast exclaiming, "My God, My God," then sank into a swoon.

I had seen folk in so-called trances, but I saw at once that this was different. Feeling alarmed a physician was summoned but she was dead when he arrived. "How hard is it

for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God."

The sudden transformation and unexpected conclusion occurred so quickly that we scarcely knew what to do for the moment. But all were deeply impressed. Be it recorded that that scene hung low for weeks over the mission so that all who had heard entered the mission filled with awe. Many who could not come wrote me concerning the incident, some doubting its occurrence.

I scarcely know how the mission became emptied that night nor how the body was removed. At last I found myself looking at Mrs. Blaire as if her face were furnishing me with a panorama of human experiences.

Like myself, she was too deeply impressed with the incident of the evening to say aught. I had been looking into her eyes without seeing her. I cannot say that I ever was so wrought up over any incident as this one in any mission with which I have been connected. Not even Jennie's conversion so moved me. No one minded to speak, but went out into the street by ones and twos when they could relax sufficiently to make their egress.

I suppose I bade Mr. and Mrs. Blue good-night. I did not say anything to Mrs. Blaire. I walked the streets until after midnight too wrought up to sleep. I finally made my way to my room and in my sleep I traveled back and forth over the years that were no more. The

preacher who quit preaching for love was in my dreams, the woman who would not marry a minister stalked back and forth, then plunged headlong into silence. I heard cries of distress and shouts of victory. I saw confused crowds running hither and yon. I heard the laments of the damned. I saw and heard angels whose white robes were glistening in perpetual dawn. Then I heard a singer in the distance yet coming nearer and nearer, like a vested choir, into the sanctuary from somewhere behind the organ. It was a wondrous voice and the words grew plain:

“When all my labors and trials are o’er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will through the ages be glory for me.”

The voice human yet above human had a thrill in it beyond any I had ever heard. My ears were atuned to finer music than they could naturally catch. But the chorus was written for mortal experience in heavenly places—mortals made immortal,

“O that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, glory for me;
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.”

The dim outline of a woman appeared in the mist. It was she who was singing,

“When, by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face,
Will through the ages be glory for me.”

The form of the woman grew distinct, the voice was still as wondrous, but more tender, the face had a far-away look as if scanning the clouds of heaven for a familiar form, while a smile infinitely beautiful intensified the light of the countenance as across immeasurable space her eyes fell upon faces seemingly familiar to her, as she began to sing,

“Friends will be there I have loved long ago;
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet, just a smile from my Saviour, I know,
Will through the ages be glory for me.”

Gradually the picture faded, the dream ended, but the song sang itself in my heart for many days. Thus has the Lord again and again blessed me. I came to recall my other dreams and to thank God for His revelations of peace and prophecy. Truly He is good to His people. “I will walk upon mine high places.”

CHAPTER XI.

Homeward Bound.

Not long after the redemption of the physician's widow Father Henderson came to visit me, spending several days. He was overjoyed seeing me in the mission work. He declared he knew I could do it and that I was doing just what the Lord wanted me to do. He said he felt toward me as Paul must have felt toward Timothy when he called him his son in the Gospel. It seemed he never would finish talking. He was a man of rare social temperament, nothing so pleased him as to mingle with men, and he always had something interesting to discuss. He never lagged in his intellectual pursuits. He had not grown stale regarding the progress of the Kingdom. He had never worked in a slum mission but he seemed to know just what to do and say without experience previously. He won the love at once of all whom he met, and when I introduced him to the mission as my spiritual father all fell in love with him at first sight. He was a beacon to us for he was set upon the hill of the Lord and could not hide himself.

He asked about the scene surrounding the conversion and death of Markson's widow, having gleaned much from the Blues. I told him all I knew, including the interview in her room. He said it was the same couple Jim and I rescued from the lake years before and he

corroborated much which the widow told me. He said that young Markson had come to him about marrying the girl and that he had told him that if God really had called him to the ministry, he should not let heaven, earth, hell, nor a woman keep him out of that calling. He said he believed the young man's call to be so vivid that not heaven, earth, nor hell, nor any combination of these, could have hindered him. But that the devil must yield the palm to a woman.

“Another case of Adam and Eve, was it?” I queried.

“It would seem so,” he replied, “except Adam was more justified in that he had no other woman on the market, while this boy could have found a dozen just as bright and far more worthy.”

Turning to me, he continued: “William, why have you not married? You need a wife. You have no idea how much good a wife would mean to you.”

“Father,” I said, “I had my dreams and they were shattered. I have had no desire to marry for years.”

“Well, how strange. But you should not allow one experience, nor even two, to deprive you of a God-ordained privilege. If a man allows one or two experiences of that sort to sour him even ever so little, he is to that degree an unbeliever in God's highest providences.”

"I had never thought of it in that way, Father Henderson," I said.

"Perhaps not, but it is none the less true. A grief may refine us or make us coarser. That will depend very largely on how we look to God in the grief."

"Have you ever suffered much?" I ventured, almost frightened at my temerity.

"Yes, William, for me." And a tear stole into his eye. "A stronger man might have stood it better. But it shook me to the very foundation. Since then I feel more other worldly than I was. I sometimes find myself longing to go to be with Christ."

"I have often wondered if there had not come into your life some mastering experience which had made you more other worldly, as you put it, than are the most of us, but I never knew."

"I had a son. He was all in the world to Mrs. Henderson and myself. He came to be highly honored by his city. But he died. I have never been the same man since. I seem to depend less on self and more on Christ. I came to find out what a refuge He is. He is all the world to me. I am 'only waiting till the shadows are a little longer grown'."

"But you are not idly waiting," I said.

"Idleness is sin. I hope that I am patiently waiting."

"So far as I am concerned," I said, taking up the thread of discourse where we had laid it

down, "I am not conscious of being soured on human love, but, you know, I have stayed so close to work here that I know of no one to whom I might look for companionship."

"Not a suitable woman in all the world, William?" he said, half in mirth and half in seriousness.

"None at all."

"Poor boy, too bad I don't have a daughter, for you'd make a good son-in-law," he said with a smile.

I was so stunned by his humorous retort that I lost all my seriousness and laughed with him.

"Father Henderson," I finally said, "You will never know how much I owe you and how deeply indebted I feel for your interest in me. I do not know where I might have been today but for you."

"You owe me nothing, but, like me, you owe Christ everything and see to it that you are always prompt to pay."

"If Christ were at all like you He would cancel the debt forthwith."

"He does cancel the debt entirely," he replied with feeling, "but He sees there are other souls like we were who are in debt to Him and won't let Him cancel the debt or do not know how to let Him cancel the debt, and He feels that you and I out of a sense of joy at our release will be willing in passing to tell

these great debtors how they may also get their debts cancelled."

"Is that the Gospel idea?" I asked.

"I am sure it is, in part, at least," he replied gravely. "And I am sure I am not quite so happy as I should be if I am not pointing others to the means of cancellation," he concluded with a smile that covered his face with radiance.

"I believe you," I said warmly, "and it is likewise a joy inexpressible to me."

My work continued with the mission. I need not relate it in further detail. To this present it engages my energies and prayers. God is still with us. Interesting scenes hold our attention and marvelous conversions inspire our hearts. Much as we love to see the tempted and erring lifted to lives of goodness, we have prayed and yearned for the day to come when such work would be no longer necessary. But it has not come yet. In some spiritual Utopia men and women may always choose the good and refuse the evil, and children grow up in an atmosphere of health, happiness, and holiness, but it has not yet come. The drift of humanity is toward the lower levels. It takes effort and devotion to make improvement.

The redemptive work of the Christ is also necessary. Trying to forget an unforgiven sin is adding insult to injury. It is ignoring the sacrifice on Calvary. It is rejecting the only cure for a sin-infested heart. It is declaring

in effect that God's estimate of sin is overdrawn. It is setting human judgment above Divine intelligence. If men and women could be made to feel how serious is a step toward sin and how difficult it is to retrace even one step, I fancy more would forbear than do. But all too often our souls are lured on by the glamour of the scene pictured. The fruit is not found to be bitter until it is eaten. The poison is not detected until it is in the system. The shackles are not considered more than adornment until they are clamped upon the flesh and the weight is experienced.

One of the stupendous facts to me is the attitude of the Old Testament heroes toward moral transgression. Contrast it with some modern views. To the prophets sin was suicidal. To some today it is educative. When we look at the impression made upon the human conscience we are inclined to believe the prophet was right. Let there ever be eternal and fatal conflict between the human heart and sin. It is the only way to eradicate what is in the heart and prevent entering the sin that is without. Let us not forget that sin caused the death of the Son of God. We should hate it for that cause.

I am not gifted with song, yet songs play an important part in my inner life. They sing themselves into my consciousness from some hidden source. It may be that in the great

Hereafter I shall sing in the heavenly choir because my soul sings even though my lips are so often mute. When I would do good inability is with me. "Songs in the night I am singing." They are glory to me. I mention one instance in particular. We had had an unusually gracious service. No visitors were there. It was just the regular mission force in charge. Souls were won for Christ and we went home happy. I fell asleep in this particularly happy state of mind with my soul singing a holy strain. Into dream I drifted with the song growing in beauty. I soon found myself in a wondrous atmosphere of the Spirit. The marvelous outlines of a house of worship are still fresh in memory. The song kept singing itself amid such beauty. Presently a woman appeared and it was she who was giving the rendition of sacred music. I had seen her before in dreams. It was she I had seen en-route west. It was she who sang in my dream after Jennie's conversion. It was she who had rejoiced in song following the conversion of the physician's widow. A creation of the soul, a child of the heart, a heavenly visitor of etherial stuff, a dream. I yearned for it to be perpetual.

It was the dream of the other years returned. I recognized the woman as being the same. I also understood a distinctive difference. In the three other dreams I had received inspiration, comfort, joy, prophecy. This time

I realized that I had a proprietary right in the woman herself. This was new, exhilarating. I had an abandonment of joy. I felt I had been exalted to tread the paths of etherial feet. The woman smiled at me in acknowledgment of my proprietary right in her. She had never done so before. How my heart yearned for her. I could have stampeded her love. I found myself making my way toward her with open arms. She smiled in return but began to recede. I followed her to the borders of dream and stood there as she disappeared. I awoke wild with a delirium of joy. I could sleep no more that night. I arose and dressed and paced the floor until weary, yet so joyful I could have wept. I scarcely know what I did that forenoon. But early in the afternoon I boarded a car for down town and walked through the streets seeking such diversion of mind as presented itself to me. So easy is it for me to secure rest by wandering aimlessly through the streets of a city that I hoped to find such aid on this occasion but it was only partial relief from my emotions which I received.

Wandering almost unconsciously through the city library looking at books yet reading none, I met Mrs. Blaire, who said she was looking for information concerning Madam Guyon, the mediaeval saint. Together we secured the reading matter and while she collected such

data as she desired I read abstractedly. Finally she asked my destination and on my replying that I had none, she said:

“Come home with me to dinner. I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Blue will be pleased to have you this evening.”

Accepting the invitation, I assisted her to the interurban. It was an eventless journey. I must have been poor company. My abstraction was surely noticeable. She did not intrude but she appeared utterly at ease. My emotions were more difficult to control or understand than they were before. On alighting from the interurban we did not take the street car to the suburb. It was a beautiful walk and each responded to the glory of the sunset skies.

Mr. and Mrs. Blue bade me welcome as they had ever done. I noticed that Parkway was settled much more than it had been years before. So many beautiful homes greeted the eye. Father Henderson's chapel had been enlarged, but he was still pastor. He would ever be loved. The evening went by all too rapidly. I do not know whether the dream furnished the mental attitude altogether or whether it divided honors with the Blues. There appeared to be such blending of the two that there was no disparity, no line of demarcation, no jar. The stars came out that eventide to light up

the coronation of a supreme day in my heart. On leaving I said to Mrs. Blaire:

"I'm coming to see you again." The utterance astonished but delighted me. She replied:

"We shall be pleased to have you."

Thanksgiving Day in New England has that reverent atmosphere which recalls Puritan days. No one seems to be responsible for it, yet everyone senses its existence. I had an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Blue to spend the day with them. I had never been absent from the mission on Thanksgiving Day since coming to it, but arranging for the services there, I looked forward to the visit with joy. I arrived in Seabend and sought out familiar streets through which I wandered, filled with varied emotions. As never before, I realized the change in my own life since I first arrived in the city. The city may have changed much, but I vastly more. I saw that I had traveled far in personal experience and character. I had been re-born and had been growing in the new birth.

I discovered that I was not the William McMasters who first set foot upon the pavements of Seabend many years before. Passing finally along the Catholic cemetery, where the pond of Parkway nestled its head, I recalled distinctly the experiences I had had concerning Mrs. Blaire. But back of the pond rose the rugged hills undisturbed save where here and there some hardy soul had builded a cottage.

The day was beautiful and the frogs were sending forth a ceaseless chorus of frog lore, and even a few birds were singing.

When I reached the house I was admitted by Mrs. Blue and was overjoyed to find Father Henderson comfortably seated. Many incidents returned through memory's lane from the first time I was in the home until the more recent days. The invitation was given in honor of their daughter's birthday. It seemed a bit incongruous to me, since they had never had a daughter, at least none who lived to be of any age, but I did not give much thought to that. Everyone seemed to be happy, none more so than the Blue's themselves.

The dinner was served in a manner befitting a daughter of Priscilla. The quaint dignity, the good cheer, and deep piety made it a Thanksgiving indeed. At the close of the meal the Bible was handed Father Henderson, who read I Corinthians XIII, and then offered prayer. Afterward Mr. Blue, in a few choice words, spoke of their home, how that an only daughter had died in infancy, that parenthood to them had been but brief, but that Mrs. Blue and he had always felt peculiar interest in every young man and woman whom they had known who was away from home and had tried to keep through the years open house for the dear lives far removed from father and mother. He went on to say that of all who had thus come to them none had occupied such

deep and abiding place in their hearts or had been so helpful to them as had Mrs. Blaire. For this reason they purposed on the morrow to legally adopt her as their daughter and heir, if she were willing. None present was more surprised than Mrs. Blaire herself. Mrs. Blue pulled her over upon her breast and kissed her while Mrs. Blaire was too overcome for words. In a few moments Father Henderson spoke choice words of approbation and gave his benediction.

Out over the rugged hills we wandered that evening while the sun capped summit and tree with surpassing glory. Pine and birch were strangely lighted, but our hearts were climbing heights and there was a glory therein which outshone the sun and the atmosphere etherial superseded that in which the pine and birch had their being. Father Henderson sat in reverie, in sorrow and joy. His life companion had waved him a loving adieu a few months previous and gone to join their son beyond the veil. It was not a sad funeral we attended. No one had lived a more unobtrusive life than had she, but none lived a holier life. Father Henderson had not wept her going. He had said, "It is fitting. The Lord doeth well. There is not cause to grieve." And no one ever saw him moody over her death. Said he to me on one occasion:

"I must hasten on. My wife and son are waiting for me. I love the ocean. I love the

hills, the flowers, these lakes, the pine woods, the birds. I love the city. I love humanity. But my citizenship is in heaven. I am ready to go back home. I keep everything in readiness for the call to return. I shall not, please God, be found unready. Praise His name."

As he sat with Mr. and Mrs. Blue after Mrs. Blaire and I had started to climb the hills, I knew full well of what he spoke. I knew his spirit. I had had a share in the services in which the frail body had been laid to rest and I had seen my spiritual father as he sat in his own house of mourning and he had not grieved. It was a coronation service rather than a burial service. He had never given his theory of life publicity but he had lived a philosophy akin to that of the apostles.

For me life was so full of the cry of need that I did not give way to personal yearnings. There was always something to do. Life was matter-of-fact because I met so many stern realities. I had sinned and been sinned against. In an hour of soul-wrenching I had fallen and had paid a heavy penalty for my fall. I was again on my feet, thanks to God and His angels of mercy, and was trying to express my gratitude to Him in terms of service in behalf of the fallen and the discouraged. Inspiration came to me at wonderful seasons, but sometimes I worked without emotions save those which came after the task began.

I came to know the sorrow of separation about this time. Father closed his eyes to mortality in physical suffering and spiritual exaltation. I was with him in his last illness, greatly to his joy. He seemed to look upon me as his superior, much to my regret. Over and over he told me with self-reproach, and yet with pride in me, that in the few years I had been in the mission I had won more souls for God than he in his entire ministry. But his ministry had been among those who had not been sick enough to feel the need of a physician. Mother took up her residence among her children. Thus it became necessary for me to move into larger quarters that she might be comfortably situated when she was with me. Mother's attitude toward my work was a constant revelation to me. She was greatly loved by the mission folk from the first. The work was so utterly new to her save what she had learned from my letters or conversations, that she appeared helpless before it, yet she had faith. Her sympathy quite often outran her energy and ability. It was this utter helplessness which furnished her with success. Love did what experience failed to do. I felt the increment of her presence.

But the joy my mother found from seeing me ministering to those in need was almost equaled because she fancied I was interested in the high regard for a noble woman. She

never failed, when with me, to assist me in being off to Parkway, for I had kept my word with Mrs. Blaire that I would call to see her again. Mother again and again essayed to give me her blessing, and smiled at my amusing attempts to be serious about it. Like many another mother, she took especial pains to learn something of the singer of Parkway Chapel and assured me she would love her as a mother should. And finally even the friends connected with the mission grew suspicious and unobtrusively lightened my duties there with a smile which could not be condemned. In my heart I thanked God for their kindly interest.

The Seaworthy Mission of Seabend planned a series of meetings for the mission workers of surrounding cities. Father Henderson was there although he had never, strictly speaking, been in charge of a mission. It was a time of refreshing from the Lord.

One afternoon, a beautiful mid-winter day, we walked out through Interlaken. On one of the lakes they were skating with all of the enthusiasm and skill of youth. On another men were diligently cutting ice. Out past a suburban provision house, up a street leading through a pine woods, past another lake, we went with no destination in mind but with destiny ahead of us. Mrs. Blaire had been reared among the hills and loved the rugged in nature. In the rebirth of her womanhood there

had come the rebirth of her love for nature. She told me she had gone this way through Interlaken again and again. I could not help noticing that it was the same way in part which Jim and Clara, Jennie and I were taking when we met the woman who had told us so much about Preacher Markson in the almost forgotten days. Sin and unbelief blight one's love for God's universe. Mrs. Blaire told me that when she was in the darkness of grief and doubt the love for nature was absent, that nature appeared constantly to be pointing an accusing finger at her. But that with Christ had come a new appreciation of the providences of God.

A pang seized my own heart, for I recalled how I had loved nature as a lad and had lost that love and had lost the power to commune with Nature in the dread long ago. I shuddered as I recalled those terrible years through which I had passed and wished that I might go back to the beginning and start all over again. I began to picture to myself what life might have been like had I never gone away from the paths of rectitude, and what the earth might have been like had there been no woe because of offenses. I lost the sense of my surroundings, lost the sense of the companionship of Mrs. Blaire, who noticed my attitude of mind and presently said kindly,

“You, too, have suffered.”

"Yes, Mary, I have suffered," replied I, coming back to present things. "I have suffered," I continued, drifting again into memory, "more than tongue can tell. Would to God I had never known the depths of despair and sin. Why could not we have had a world like God wanted it to be? Think of the millions who might have lived happy, holy, helpful lives had not someone else cast a stumbling stone before their untried feet."

"It will be different after while, William, when we get to the end of the way," she said, smiling through her tears.

"Thank God for the difference promised," said I. "I sometimes sit and try to picture what my father, who suffered, and what Mother Henderson, who sorrowed, must be gazing upon in that land where the flowers never fade, and the stars forever shine without a dark atmosphere to enhance their beauty, and the sun never gets too hot, and yet forever approaches the zenith, and the dews of refreshing forever reflect the glory of heaven."

"William," she replied, "I am on my way thither. The beauties of nature keep me reminded of the luxuriance of paradise. I am glad beyond words that I shall see it all some time."

"With my rebirth in Christ I, too, am re-loving Nature," I said. "I thought the power to be thrilled by the hills, the birds, the flowers,

the sea, had become forever dead, but I have discovered my error. God rehabilitates the soul. It is beyond me. 'With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.' Praise His name."

"Do you see," I said, as we were descending a particularly rugged hill set with many huge rocks, "here is a wonderful spring. Spring water has a charm for me. As a lad I loved to steal off to the woods and drink the cooling water. I offer you," handing her a rustic cup full of the cold water.

"Let us see where the rippling water goes," she said when we had each drunken.

Following the hill stream we descended to a place facing a small lake, where we found a convenient seat of stone. Here Mrs. Blaire seated herself, but I stood trying to see the entire surroundings.

"See," I said presently, "back of us lies the city whose presence is indicated by those columns of smoke befogging the sky. The smoke is evidence of man's presence. Do you know that the first city was founded by a murderer? I also notice that the last city is the New Jerusalem, which is founded by the Lord. I also notice that smoke is mentioned in connection with the burning of Babylon, the city of wickedness. I wonder to which group our modern cities belong."

“Could it not be that they belong to both? Is there not something of hell and of heaven in them?”

“Much of hell, I fear,” I mused, “yet enough of heaven to prevent their suffering the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. But I believe there will be a great burning some day.”

“I fear so,” she said sadly. “But God will not let the righteous perish,” she finished with a smile.

“I fancy I can see that day of burning now,” I said, still in reverie. “I fancy I can see the spirits of the just rising out of the smoke which is now ascending to heaven over the hill down which we have come.”

“They must be apparelled in garment surpassing beauty,” she said joyously.

“They are,” I answered.

Mrs. Blaire arose, and turning, watched the smoke ascending for some moments, then a smile lighted her face as she said, pointing to the sky:

“Back of the rugged hills ascends the smoke. From the rocky heart of the hills flows the cooling waters, down their rugged breast it ripples in laughter to tumble delightedly into this wondrous lake.” She turned toward the lake at our feet with graceful gesture, “Here in the lake it loiters in peace and purity, undisturbed by smoke or wind, or rumble of the street. Yonder it steals out of the lake to meander across the marshes toward the sea,

where it joins an innumerable company of rivers which have made glad a thousand shores, have blessed myriad cities, and laved the feet of a billion trees and flowers in every land beneath the stars. These rivers all came out of the sea and at the end of days have returned to its bosom to again do the bidding of the Lord of the universe. Can man live and serve less complainingly than this rippling stream which was born beneath the smoke and cradled its head in this rocky bosom?"

She looked surpassingly beautiful as she concluded this sentence. Her very soul in its committal to God was crystal to my gaze. She was not aware of the beauty she was revealing. To me it was a poem, a psalm, never before written. Presently she noticed my enraptured look and said:

"William, you are having a revelation. Can you not share it?"

"I was trying to trace the rippling water from its cradle on the hillside until it starts anew at the behest of the Lord of all life," I said, lost in feeling.

"I think I, too, would be happy to trace its windings. I wonder how far it gets into the depths of the sea until it is called forth again. I am sure it must go on in its mission of laughing service forever."

A willful ringlet of hair lay beneath her hat upon her forehead. Scarcely cognizant of what I did, I touched it as if I would take it as

my own while I said, my voice sounding to me as if another man were speaking:

"Let us then trace its course through the years forever together."

She looked into my eyes until I felt there was no corner of my soul she was not seeing, then she replied as she turned to look the way toward the sea the hill water must take,

"I am ready."

I do not know which road we took back to Parkway. On the way back she called me from my silence to inquire,

"You are almost pensive."

"Yes, but not quite," I replied. "I had a vision. I just saw unaccountable to myself a dream of a woman singing that I had years ago while on the train west. The same woman sang in dream one night after a glorious night in the mission in the west. The same woman sang the night after Mrs. Markson died. She sang in dream again following an exalting meeting at the mission."

"It must have been a wonderfully joyous dream if I am to judge by your face," she said, radiantly.

"It was heaven to me," I said, with an emotion uncontrollable. "I am now suffering with joy from the realization of the dream."

"I do not understand," she said quietly.

"You are the woman of the dreams."

She turned astonished eyes toward me for a moment, then as suddenly turned away where

almost at her feet lay a pool of crystal water, reflecting the evening star in early twilight.

"My good angel," I said, stepping to her side.

"My husband to be," she whispered as I kissed the ringlet that graced her forehead.

Before reaching the Parkway borders she turned to me and said:

"Now that you are to be my husband, may I speak of my own experiences?"

"You may speak of anything you wish," I said expectantly.

"I cannot explain it at all," she began slowly, as if she were assuming too great a privilege. "But my heart has cried out to you ever since the evening we discovered we were of kin in our own experiences, and again and again you have stood before me in my waking moments in spite of all I could do to dismiss the sense of your presence."

One of the city pastors of Seabend came to me before the series of meetings at the Seaworthy Mission closed, asking me to conduct revival meetings for him in early spring. I frankly told him I was utterly inexperienced in working among the class of people to whom he ministered and that my type of discourse would not be acceptable to his hearers. This he would not accept. He said he was not so sure there were not respectable people in his parish who were as unholy in life and thought as the unfortunates to whom I ministered, but

that they had been able to keep their sins from appearing so flagrant and that thus far they had not been compelled to suffer the full consequences for their misdoings as had those of the slums. He was convinced that his church needed to hear the stories of redeeming love which were familiar to me in order that they might again be quickened in their faith in the power of God to save to the uttermost and man's exceeding need of this power in all walks of life. He told me that he would furnish the leader of song or I could secure such as I felt would best fit into my methods, but that he wanted me to feel entirely free to conduct the series as I was led of the Spirit of God. I asked time for prayer, which was granted. At last I saw what great opportunities lay before me and after much prayer I accepted his invitation. Thus has God led me in untried and undreamed of paths.

Back to the mission I went facing two new worlds. Evangelism among the so-called upper groups of society, and the joy of the love of a good woman, and not only a good woman but one congenial whose comradeship had in it no sense of incongruity. There was a buoyancy in my heart so new to me and a dream which promised substantial fulfillment. Mrs. Blaire and I were married in the quaint and saintly home in Parkway, the simple ceremony being performed by my spiritual father and constant shepherd, Father Henderson. My mother and

sister Alice were present. Several wedding days have elapsed since then and I am no longer a young man, although my good wife chides me for even thinking such thoughts. But our home was ever open to Father Henderson, whom I never saw happier than when I told him we were to be married by him. From that time on he called Mrs. McMasters his daughter, and such she proved to be.

When the time came for the revival meetings in Seabend, my good wife took full charge of the music. This was the beginning of many invitations to conduct evangelistic services. So many of these we felt to be our duty to accept. Today more of our time is given to these services than to the mission, with which we are still connected. But the abolition of the liquor traffic has decreased the number to whom the mission must minister. Thank God for growing sobriety in America.

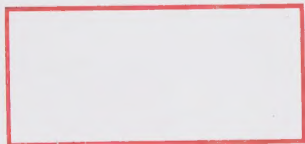
My good wife, who has sat at my elbow so much while I have been writing this personal narrative, suggests that I have arrived at a good place to cease. I value her wisdom as the reader must who has patiently read thus far.

It is with regret that I must write that Father Henderson no longer visits us in person. His spirit has been called to heavenly habitations. His stout heart beat a requiem and we laid his body to rest where it slumbers in hope between the bodies of his wife and

son. His memory is holy to us. Mrs. McMasters and I followed his corpse as children beloved, for he had no kin of his own remaining. The influence of this good man lives on within us like a holy visitor, radiant with the glory of God. Methinks I can see him singing among the redeemed with his enrapt gaze fixed upon the Divine Galilean.

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